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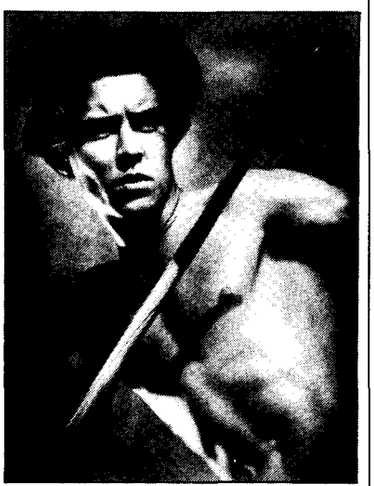

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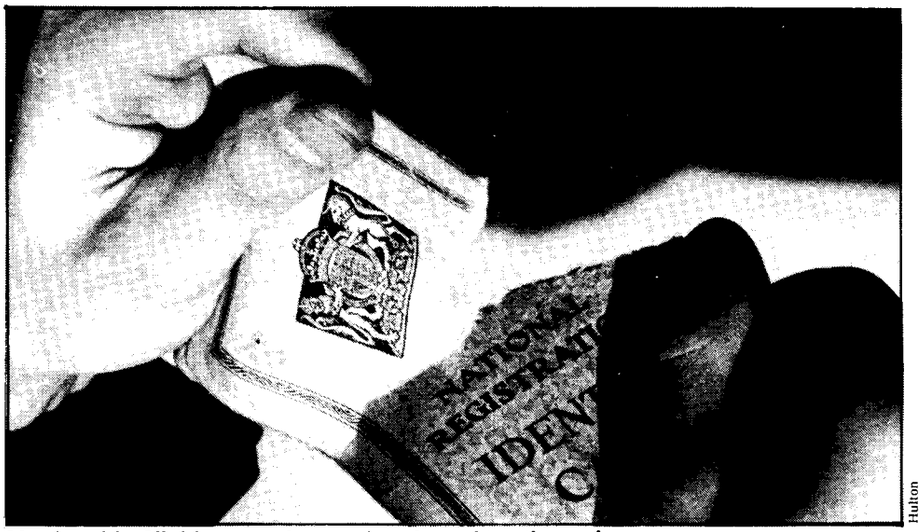

Hulton

Identity crisis: All citizens may have to piece the card together again

Politics Of Identity

The problem with compulsory identity cards is that, like the rain, they fall equally upon the just and the unjust; upon the good and godly and the enemy within. Even the most authoritarian government has to pause before it risks alienating its electoral support by a demeaning and expensive form of universal supervision.

But it has been known for a long time that Home Office and DSS technocrats were interested in the possibility of equipping clients of the state and other doubtful characters with cards electronically coded not only with their entitlements but with other data that they themselves should preferably not know about. National insurance cards, issued since 1984, have in fact had a 200-letter capacity for coded information. To get compulsorily carded and coded, however, an individual would first have had to fall on hard times. Many enemies of the state would slip through.

The possibility of making everyone carry an identity card has now re-entered the political agenda as a spurious spin-off of the problem of football crowd control. The original idea of subjecting about 5m people to such a regime in order to keep a few hundred hooligans out of football grounds (and presumably in the all-day pubs instead), is now making its way through parliament as the government's Football Spectators Bill.

But the football authorities' argument that only a national identity card scheme for *all* citizens could work, which seemed at the time to be no more than a way of demonstrating the absurdity of the government's proposal, recently surfaced in a bill sponsored by, among others, Police Federation spokesperson Sir Eldon Griffiths. In February, the bill mustered 37 votes but, denied government support, failed to get a second reading.

The bill was of frightening simplicity. It would have made it a crime for anyone aged 12 or over not to have an identity card and not to produce it to the police on demand, 'so as to . . . ascertain its validity': in other words to check on your entitlement to hold the card, not merely to discover your name. The home secretary would have had power not only to lay down what particulars the card was to contain but to exempt named classes of people from the bill.

In spite of the fate of this piece of parliamentary private enterprise, the issue is unlikely to go away. It is no longer directed at football hooligans. What is the real agenda?

For a start, the belief that Britain is awash with illegal immigrants is not confined to eccentric members of the judiciary, and the very process of issuing cards would enable whole communities to be combed out in search of proof of entitlement to be in Britain before a card is issued. There may be resistance from police on the beat, initially, to enforcing South African-style pass laws for the whole population, especially when South Africa has had to modify its own pass laws; but there are tempting possibilities of coding identity cards with data, verified and unverified, that will make law enforcement easier, if not more accurate or just. The Association of Chief Police Officers sees 'no disadvantages in principle (*sic*) or in practice' in the proposal.

Then there is the poll tax. It is one thing for people to forfeit their right to vote as a trade-off for not registering as taxable adults. It may be another for them to be unable to get identity cards, and to be unable to draw benefit or obtain public or social services for want of them, unless they register for poll tax too.

In other words, the primary purpose of an identity card is not to identify its bearer (no doubt all German spies had them between 1939 and 1945 when they were obligatory for everyone resident in Britain): it is to register the holder's citizenship, and it carries the corollary that to lack one is to be an outlaw.

For those who do have cards, the coded data they may carry are without limit and effectively beyond control: creditworthiness, HIV status, subversive tendencies . . . They can do silently what Malaysia already does openly: issue different-coloured cards to people with criminal convictions and 'political offenders'.

Through the eyes of a government bent on erasing dissent and punishing outcasts, identity cards for all (or most) are an attractive but risky expedient, for nobody can be sure how far Middle England will resist this incursion into its way of life. Although the government's present stance is that this sort of incursion is not cost-effective, the stance may change in years to come.

There is an alternative, however, which the government is now exploring – voluntary identity cards. The idea is not quite as soft as it at first seems. If those organisations which control public or private services and supply goods decide to do so, they can effectively make a voluntary system compulsory by refusing to deal with people who cannot produce an identity card. If Whitehall can make the cards attractive to these bodies, for instance by encoding enough useful data on them, the government will have achieved through the market a new dimension in social control. The beauty of it will be that nobody will have to be fined or go to jail for not having an identity card: they will simply go short of the things they need in order to live. There's freedom for you. ●

Stephen Sedley

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The Art Of Science

Edinburgh launches its first festival of science in April, in a brave attempt to demonstrate that science can be just as appealing as concerts and cabaret. It is a daring move – and not the kind of thing that most city councils dream up – because so few people see science as part of our culture.

The arts may be riddled with class divisions, but things are worse when it comes to science: almost everyone regards it as arcane and alien, detached from political and economic concerns, the exclusive preserve of the 'expert'.

The Edinburgh International Festival of Science and Technology, from April 3-12, will try to explode such myths through a mixture of lectures, tours, demonstrations and exhibitions. Lecturers chosen for their lively delivery will range from critiques of psychoanalysis and the exclusion of women from medicine to how it felt to play golf on the moon or make a Muppet work. The festival will display science projects by Lothian region schoolchildren of all ages in an attempt

to 'catch them young', as director Howard Firth puts it.

The festival steers clear of the 'negative' side of science, says Firth. Theoretical critiques from the Left have tended to reinforce the notion that science is irretrievably sullied by capitalism, racism, sexism and militarism. Yet, Firth argues: 'It is not inconsistent to be an orthodox scientist and to be extremely concerned about the world, as research in climatology shows. We are hoping to build on the greater public awareness of the environment now to draw people in.' A series of guided tours of the city's botanic gardens, for instance, advertised as 'Travel round the world in 48 hours', will give people a real sense of the diversity of plants.

Edinburgh city council has also awarded its first 'Edinburgh medal' for science, worth £5,000, to Abdus Salam, the physicist who won the Nobel prize in 1979 and an outspoken proponent of global co-operation in science.

Amid the popular science will be the predictable messages. The Scottish universities have done their best to demonstrate that they have toed the government line by seeking to develop contract research and 'technology transfer'. Industrialists will promote careers in science – even for women – haunted by the spectre of a severe shortage of trained technical staff by the next decade. And with Europe and 1992 just over the horizon, Scottish industry will be told to think in terms of a single market.

But neither industry nor the European Commission has yet exploited the full potential of this new celebration of science; the festival has received only about £130,000 from industrial sponsorship (of which £100,000 came from a single source, the Royal Bank of Scotland), backed up by £65,000 from the city council. But 'scientific literacy' and the 'public understanding of science' is becoming increasingly respectable on the Right, and in future years the festival will become more 'technocratic' in character, with more emphasis on trade exhibitions and company PR promoting the benefits of technological products. It is high time for those on the Left to travel to Edinburgh to discover the joys of science. ●

Gail Vines

1066 and all that: The beginning of the battle of Senlac

Historic Battle Lines

History in schools has taken its fair share of knocks in the last year or so. Debate over skills versus content, empathy or imagination, has been serious, entertaining, vicious and just plain silly at times. Now that it is history per se which is under scrutiny, history teachers in schools and society at large need to consider just what it is we want children to gain from history lessons.

Kenneth Baker sees its purpose to encourage an understanding of how 'a free and democratic society has developed over the centuries' through a core curriculum centred on Britain's political, constitutional and cultural heritage. Problems will be manifold, not least arising from the pretence that liberal democracy is free from ideology. Clearly there are certain freedoms that are valued throughout society, but whether these are best transmitted via a Whiggish view of British history is debatable. Whose culture is to be transmitted? And will an anglocentric-led content enable pupils to understand the world we live in today, or merely encourage nationalistic jingoism or the 'British is best' variety often encountered in the classroom, especially among white middle-class males?

The ultimate factor determining the content of history teaching is what society believes history is and what it wants transmitted to pupils. In recent years there has been a determined effort to move away from history as received facts about the past, and encourage children to think and make sense of the world they live in, developing an understanding of how we have arrived at today. The Britain we live in is as much a multicultural society as it has always been, and the world grows smaller and smaller. History teaching must relate to pupils' own experiences or they will respond with the cry which is heard today less often in the classroom: 'History is boring'. ●

Christine Joscelyne

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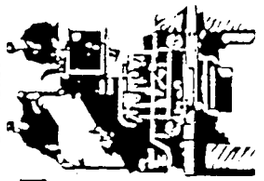

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Moscow's Bitter Harvest

Massive civil strife over the boundaries between two Union Republics. Armed clashes between rival national movements. Pogroms against Armenians in Sumgait and other Azerbaijani towns. Refugees streaming in both directions. Civil war averted only by the intervention of the Soviet army. Why?

Experts have pointed to the clash between Armenian and pan-Turkic nationalism (the Azeris consider themselves 'Turks') in the years before the region was absorbed into the USSR in 1920. This struggle straddles the frontier of the Soviet Union, in time and in space. Thus the territory of Karabakh was transferred from Armenia to Azerbaijan in 1921 as part of a Soviet effort to court Atatürk's Turkey.

But why, after almost 60 years of Soviet power, should these old quarrels retain such explosive potential? The answer implicit in much Soviet and Western commentary is that national hatred is a natural and eternal attribute of the human psyche, which an anti-nationalist political structure can only temporarily force underground.

This is to replace the flux of real history by timeless myth. And to insult all the ordinary people who remain sane and decent, such as the Azeri families who hid their Armenian neighbours from the pogrom-makers at risk to their own lives. No, the roots of this tragedy, as of others, must be sought not in ancient history or in human nature, but in the social conditions of the immediate past. That is, the *Soviet* past.

Closer study reveals that the Soviet political structure, at least in the post-Stalin period, has been far from free of local nationalist tendencies. The discontinuity between the placid surface of life before Gorbachev and the present turbulence is much less sharp than appears at first glance.

From where, for example, do the Armenian and Azeri national movements take their ideas and claims? Dissident influences, no doubt, have played some role. However, their nationalist ideologies have on the whole been preserved and elaborated by scholars and writers working within official institutions, under the patronage of Republican leaderships.

Thus territorial claims now advanced by the movements are justified by reference to the work of historians and archeologists at Republican institutes, who have 'proven' with the aid of ancient documents and remains that certain sections of contemporary Azerbaijan belong to 'historical Armenia' (or vice versa). Some such claims, above all the Armenian claim to Upper Karabakh, are also consistent with the current nationalist composition of the population, but others, in particular the Armenian claim to the Nakhichevan enclave, are not.

In general, the image of the USSR as a strictly unified polity, effectively controlled from the Kremlin, has long been a fiction. Especially under Brezhnev, the party bureaucracy took on a 'feudal' form: regional chiefs and their mafias, though continuing to pay obeisance to Moscow, acquired a relatively free hand within their domains. Most appointments to important posts were determined locally.

Feudalisation of the power structure was far advanced at the level of the Union Republics, where considerable power resided. This was so particularly along the southern periphery, in Transcaucasia, Kazakhstan and central Asia. Here the power of the Republican mafias was closely bound up with the privileges assigned to the titular nationality (eg, Kazakhs in Kazakhstan). Non-titular nationalities, such as the Armenians in Azerbaijan and the Azeris in Armenia, suffered discrimination and cultural repression. Russians, protected by their privileged position at the Union level, were admittedly an exception.

Associated Press

Nationalist conflicts in Armenia: Out of Moscow's control

The initial effect of the process of democratisation under Gorbachev was to enhance the autonomy of the Republican elites, making it much more visible. These elites have been able to exploit the real grievances of fellow-nationals in other Republics for the purposes of inter-Republican rivalry. With remarkable speed, the mass national movements arising from below and the Republican elites above entered into intensive interaction. Officials both fell under the influence of the mass movements and learned how to manipulate them.

The ugliest instance of this interaction was the pogroms in Azerbaijan. Eye-witness accounts of the pogrom in Sumgait, published in *Detente* (No 13, 1988), make clear that it was not a spontaneous outburst but a planned action. The killers were armed with primitive weapons (hatchets, knives etc,) specially manufactured in workshops, used lists of addresses of Armenian families, and were given free rein by the local police, who even released those arrested and handed over by the army. The confused reactions of city party officials suggest that they were not the direct organisers of the pogrom, as some of the victims suspected; but whatever nationalist network did organise it evidently received much assistance from official bodies.

In the wake of the disturbances, Moscow is reasserting control over the southern Republics – control that will be much more effective than in the past. Republican radio stations will stop directing their propaganda at one another and return to the more standard practice of denouncing non-Soviet targets. And many of the local inhabitants will find central rule relatively benign, though less 'democratic' from the point of view of the Republican elites.

All the same, this 'solution' has disappointing implications for Soviet society. The only institution upon which Moscow was able to rely to bring events under control was the army, which alone is run on completely centralised lines. This circumstance sets definite limits on demilitarisation. The idea of replacing the large standing army by a much smaller professional army combined with territorial militias, publicly advocated by Colonel Savinkin, must now look impractical and even dangerous for the foreseeable future. The honeymoon period of *perestroika*, when – at least to its enthusiasts – anything seemed possible, is well and truly over. ●

Stephen Shenfield

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Ricardo Lagos: Candidate for consensus

INTERVIEW

Tightrope To Transition

During the 1970-73 Allende government, Ricardo Lagos was one of the Chilean president's most respected economic advisers, and acted as delegate to the United Nations in New York for periods throughout those years. Following the September '73 military coup which brought Pinochet to power, Lagos became an outspoken critic of the regime as leader of the opposition Socialist Party. He has played a prominent part in the umbrella group Party For Democracy (PPD) which brought together the coalition of forces which produced a 'No' vote in the plebiscite on Pinochet's future as president last October. Lagos is a front-runner to lead a future democratic government in Chile. *Benny Pollack,* who worked with Lagos at the UN during the Allende government, interviewed him for *Marxism Today*

The defeat of Pinochet was largely due to the unity fostered among the opposition. The presidential elections to replace Pinochet will probably take place in December 1989. Can that opposition unity continue until then?

We in the Party For Democracy (PPD) and in the Socialist Party are very clear about the need to preserve that unity. We need a common political platform on some fundamental issues which need to be tackled with urgency, such as social investment in health, education and social security. We are not talking here of a socialist programme, because the dilemma is not between socialism and capitalism, but between dictatorship and democracy. We can learn from the lessons of some European societies which have successfully created strong democratic regimes after decades of totalitarianism or authoritarianism, through the quality and strength of democratic forces. In Chile, I am confident that the unity of the 16 parties and movements which defeated Pinochet can and should be recreated to see him go.

But are you not being over-optimistic? The recent foundation of PAIS (the Broad Party of the Socialist Left) which includes the left-wing *Almeyda* socialists, the Communists and the left-wing *Palma* radicals, surely poses a potential threat to that unity?

No. I don't think so. PAIS is an attempt to give an official identity to parties and movements which Pinochet wants to exclude from the democratic process. Because they by and large represent what I would call the traditional Left, they are more easily identified with the politics of state-oriented socialism of Allende's Popular Unity, and so what they are doing is in fact testing the sincerity of the military regime. We think that no one should be excluded because of his or her ideas, and have every confidence that PAIS will eventually integrate without reservation into our broad political and social-democratic front. It is true that we need now to advance further, to agree on a common platform and not just a common candidate.

Programme and candidate: which is more important?

They are both important. As I said, after 15 years of repression, the Chilean people need urgent action. The health, education and social security systems have been all but eliminated, and no parliamentary or presidential system can survive without addressing those issues first. So it is important for Left, Right and Centre to agree on a minimum programme of reconstruction as well as a candidate to face the military regime's candidate.

Reconstruction will cost money. You are obviously aware that the international financial community is wary of a future democratic government's economic policies. Businessmen fear that the high rate of profitability of their investments – around 40% – which has made the Chilean regime the darling of the banks, will be badly affected. And there are no signs of the foreign debt problem receding. How would you tackle these problems?

Virtually all the democratic forces in Chile see a renegotiation of the country's foreign debt as vital. We have been paying 5-10% of our Gross Domestic Product just to service the debt and this blocks all attempts to break the vicious circle of dependency: we cannot develop, nor embark on redistributive policies. We very much favour a concerted Latin American renegotiating effort, so that the creditors' countries have a responsible, coherent partner to talk and listen to. There are three important actors in the foreign debt drama: the creditor countries, the debtor countries and the bankers. Creditor countries can persuade the banks and finance institutions operating within their boundaries that it is in nobody's interest to bring default nearer by being inflexible. After all, the whole international financial system depends on this: we all win or lose depending on how we manage the crisis. What we all have to understand is that the debt problem is not merely economic or financial, but political, needing lots of common sense to argue the issues through.

But how will you finance the social investment required to sustain democratic progress in Chile after the dictatorship?

The point I am trying to make is that we need the cooperation of the international community, so that we can redirect resources hitherto going to service the debt, towards a minimum vital programme of social investment. Without it, no democratic regime can survive: the pressures after years of repression will be too difficult to handle. We simply cannot afford to ask the Chilean people to postpone their legitimate aspirations for fairer income distribution, humane wages, and decent education and health services.

The next presidential election will take place in December 1989 – but under the terms of the 1980 constitution which severely limits the exercise of democratic rights. Specifically,

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it prohibits the participation of 'subversive' parties, maintains a 'National Security Council' as watchdog over the new political system, and gives Pinochet the right to appoint a number of senators. Do you accept these terms?

These limitations are unacceptable. Even the National Party and the National Renewal Party, both of which supported Pinochet in the plebiscite, are now against these undemocratic aspects, and are campaigning for the reform of the constitution.

Does the future government intend to take those responsible for human rights violations to court?

If we are going to be a truly democratic society, those guilty of crimes of any nature should be punished. Independent tribunals should examine cases brought by individuals. There is no way this issue can be hidden under the carpet. But we should not have, say, Nuremburg trials in Chile. Justice will have to be done and will have to be seen to be done, but massive political or criminal trials are out of the question, in my opinion.

What economic system should replace the current one? The 'law of comparative advantage' has brought significant benefits to certain exporters, such as fruit and wood producers, whose goods have been very competitive abroad. Will this continue?

The positive aspects of the current economic model should be preserved. We need and want foreign investment, and we need and want income from exports. We should be able to guarantee a good rate of profitability in both cases, but not at the price of unrestricted exploitation of labour. This cannot continue in a democracy – for moral, ethical reasons. I am sure responsible members of the business community realise they cannot base their success on the inhuman exploitation of labour; such a system is bound to break up sooner or later. And in Chile, after 15 years of unfairness, abuse and exploitation, change is in everybody's interest.

Can you expand on the nature of the PPD and its relationship to the Socialist Party? How do you intend to avoid the potential contradictions of being the leader, simultaneously, of two political groups?

The PPD is an umbrella organisation, of which the Socialist Party is part. We have there people from the Right and the Centre as well. All agree that democratic reconstruction is the first priority and ideological differences can be argued over after. The PPD has no ideological goals other than the restoration of a democratic regime, while the Socialist Party is still committed, and rightly so, to the establishment of a democratic socialist society. These goals are not contradictory, for without a working democracy, a socialist society is simply out of reach. But the enormity of what the Pinochet dictatorship has done is such that before we can even begin to think about socialism, we have first to consolidate a fair, modern, participative democratic system.

Reflex

After the dictator: Will Chile say 'yes' to democracy?

Who will be the candidate for the presidential election?

The PPD and Socialist Party are firmly in favour of a consensus candidate, someone with sufficient moral and political standing to keep the coalition united. There will still be problems agreeing a common list of parliamentary candidates, but we will do our utmost to achieve it.

The Socialist Party is now divided. Are the ideological differences between your own moderate Socialist Party and the *Almeyda* socialists irreconcilable?

We hope to rebuild a strong Socialist Party which will include all the major ideological currents of the old, historical Chilean socialism. That way we would offer to the electorate a strong and broad left-wing alternative. The other big blocs are doing that: Christian Democrats in the Centre, and the democratic Right. Perhaps this, plus the Communist Party, will represent the realignment of forces in a future democratic regime. But the future Socialist Party should be sophisticated and flexible enough to represent the new class situation in Chile. We cannot exclude the new urban and small-producer farming sectors. We will have to see how best to harmonise long-overdue social justice with economic efficiency; political freedom with responsible exercise of rights; wealth creation with fairer distribution of income and resources.

We have to seize the opportunity given to us by the plebiscite victory. Pinochet is isolated, and the armed forces do not want to fall with him. They will continue to support the process of transition to democracy. But the armed forces need to be convinced themselves that we in the opposition mean business: that we represent a sizeable majority of the Chilean people, that we have a coherent programme and that we can guarantee its implementation through democratic consensus. ●

Marxism Today Coming Next Month

The April issue will be rather different from the normal monthly fare. It will be devoted to a single theme: **The Future Of Europe.**

1992 and the European Community; the relationship between Western and Eastern Europe; Gorbachev's Common European Home; the decline of the nation-state; green Europe.
Plus European culture: language, tv, humour and fashion.
Contributors include **David Marquand** and **Tom Nairn.**

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(Bodies unable to affiliate to ELSSOC because of financial difficulties may apply for a reduced rate)

Return to above address.

Despite the victory of the 'NO' vote last October the situation in Chile has barely changed and General Pinochet remains in power. Under the present constitution, the election to be held in December 1989 will *NOT* be a fair one. Torture and kidnapping in Chile are widespread.

- **there are over 600 people imprisoned for their political activities**
- **more than 2000 individuals have disappeared**
- **9 political prisoners are held under the death sentence**

BOYCOTT CHILE

Now more than ever the Chilean people need to know that they are not forgotten and the continuation of international pressure is crucial. Chile Solidarity has always had a policy of total isolation of the Pinochet regime, and it is vital that that continues until there is a full restoration of human rights and a return to democracy.

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Anne Baird

Just Passing Through

Birmingham's having a celebration – and why not? There's reason enough, writes Mary Cutler

It's Birmingham's hundredth birthday this year. You know Birmingham. You passed through there once. This is the standard response to the revelation of my origins; my standard retort is, 'Thankyou'. We'll keep the place to ourselves. You don't know what you're missing.

Being a Brummie is like being an Australian used to be. You deliver spirited, well-researched and witty lectures on the rich culture and radical heritage of the city and people nod sympathetically, and choke back their sniggers.

So I'll spare you the lecture. I won't tell you about 18-year old Ken Tynan sauntering down New Street, a red ribbon threaded in his black silk umbrella, on his way to play Hamlet. I shan't mention Tolkien brooding on Middle Earth and the Hobbit in the leafy suburbs of Hall Green. I shan't even reveal that the illustrator of *Rupert Bear* was a Brummie; those wonderful sea-shores the natural product of the imagination of a land-locked child. I'm going to tell you about my great aunts.

My great aunt Sue was a forewoman at ICI before, during, and after the first world war. My twin great aunts, Lil and Beck, worked all their lives in the various skilled small industries so characteristic of the city, produced three children between them and couldn't iron a shirt or make a stew to save their lives. My daughter's home economics teacher was shocked that she didn't possess a single female relative who could teach her how to hem a skirt. But when, at 11, I toyed with the idea of being a barrister, my mother, who had left school at 14, produced the name of the only woman judge in England without pausing for breath. Consequently, when I went off to my posh university to find the embryonic feminist movement proudly discovering role models and working women and contraception and power dressing, I was a bit surprised. We'd had them in Birmingham for years. (You should have seen my great aunt Sue in a cloche hat.)

We had other things, too. The sixth-formers who the little girls at my school had crushes on were not captains of the hockey teams, but veterans of the first Aldermaston marches. (I couldn't tell you who was in the hockey teams – people joined under assumed names.) At the boys' school next door the ubiquitous Ken Tynan had won a debate against the motion that 'This house thinks the present generation has lost the ability to entertain itself' by praising the joys of masturbation. In 1941. We had to make do with our classics teacher telling us that Sappho was a very passionate woman. Nevertheless I went off to my posh university and discovered that some people had been repressed by their schools . . .

We don't know who we are, you see, stuck here on the dividing line of Britain, so we have to keep asking questions to find out. We don't know what will work, so we experiment. This explains our passion for pulling down the city. When I came home from university every term I used to get lost; they kept moving New Street station. Nostalgia for a Brummie is a building site. My childhood landscapes have been destroyed; there were fields and trees at the bottom of my garden – it's very beautiful in the suburbs of Birmingham (you won't believe me, of course) – and on the brow of the hill there was a factory, Birmetals. Its green lights twinkled for the night shift; my mother used to tell me Father Christmas made toys there. It closed down in the 70s – because of the strike, Margaret Thatcher claimed: rejoice, rejoice, that's what comes of people paying themselves more than they earn – and they tore the roof off it. There ain't no Santa Claus.

They tore the roof off our beautiful Victorian reference library too, and rain fell on the stained glass and embossed gold of the names of the benefactors of that cathedral to learning and self-help. Although it has to be said – and I speak as one who spent the 60s in there doing my homework – that rain used to fall on your head quite regularly even when it had a roof.

Go and see the Rotunda while it's still there – next time you're passing through. It's a round office tower block in the city centre, like an enormous candle, fat and fun; but it's been up for 20 years, which makes it an ancient monument, so its days are numbered. Some Birmingham writers thought we might write a play to celebrate the centenary, set in a sit-in to save the Rotunda; but we got into such a violent debate about whether it was worth saving, we all hurried back to our own study/workshops to write our own plays in true individualistic Brummie fashion.

Three of us can actually trace our families back to the jewellery quarter: grandfather, great-grandfather and, in my case, great great-aunt, master and mistress jewellers. Craft and art and industry in harmony, as they are on the Birmingham shield which used to be on the side of the Corporation buses until they turned into West Midlands Passenger Transport: two sturdy figures wielding hammers to knock things down and tools to build them up again with the city motto at their feet. Forward.

Forward. To the new international convention centre. Fortunately it isn't built yet so we are enjoying beautiful vistas while they flatten Broad Street: panoramic views of the Gas Street canal basin; wonderful jumbles of old and new, while Watt and Boulton and Murdoch stand on their plinth and think on – 'if I'd known it was going to come to this I wouldn't have boiled the kettle' – and the cranes tower above, still festooned with fairy lights and Christmas trees. We're very fond and full of trees in Birmingham; we used to be the Forest of Arden. And there's the Rep and the art gallery clock and Hansom's town hall – trust Birmingham to get its town hall designed by the man who invented the taxi – and Chamberlain's fountain and Simon Rattle's City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra play on.

Marc Kirsten

Watt & Co: Left standing

And there in the mud and the rubble and the clay glimmers that vision of the city that young Joe Chamberlain had as he walked through the slums of Five Ways to his office in tree-lined Colmore Row. When it's finished and the vision's made concrete I expect we shall find we've betrayed it. But we'll pull it down and start again. Forward. Happy birthday, Birmingham. From me and my great aunts. ●

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LETTERS

Future Of Welfare Contract

'The problem of the nature and extent of the provision to be made for old age is the most important, and in some ways the most difficult, of all the problems of social security.' This is not an extract from Paul Johnson's pessimistic peer into the future (*MT* January), but from Beveridge's 1942 report on social insurance.

Beveridge too was alarmed at the low birth rates and growing proportions of pensioners. But his assumptions about the increases in the elderly population failed to anticipate the postwar 'baby boom'.

Johnson is probably right on the demography. However, he is surely wrong in his analysis, and repeated 'problem' orientation. The ageing of the population will have profound effects. But this is a challenge and a triumph of improved living standards, rather than a cause for so much wailing and gnashing of teeth.

The major problem which Johnson foresees concerns the future of the welfare contract. How can a growing pool of economically-inactive elderly people be sustained? It is, he suggests, 'inevitable that the interaction of current demographic trends and current welfare policies will impose a large, growing and possibly unsustainable fiscal burden on the productive populations.' The ratio of national insurance contributors to pensioners is cited (expected to fall from a current 2.3:1 to 1.6:1 by the 2030s). This, concludes Johnson, implies an increase in national insurance contributions from 12.5% of the wage bill to 18%. But in an increasingly technological society does it really make sense to view the number of employees as the only indicator of wealth generation? Industries which are less labour than silicon-intensive are nonetheless achieving economic growth and productivity. This underlines the need for society to view the challenge of demographic change collectively.

Another approach to the problem of a shrinking workforce, Johnson claims, 'is to attempt to raise the domestic fertility rate.' While there are arguments in favour of compensating women for their opportunity-costs incurred in childbirth and family-raising, and for providing childcare facilities, these are not generally pronatalist arguments. Even if they were, should purely material considerations be encouraged in a society which doesn't value children as citizens?

Paul Johnson is right on one thing: the issues which will arise in 30 or so years, require urgent and considered action. The short time-horizon of all governments is not helpful, but the challenges of today will become the crises of tomorrow without clear and deliberate strategies now. ●

Melanie Henwood, London

Singular Pact

Tricia Davis and David Green deserve thanks for laying out (*MT*, February) the arguments for an electoral alliance to oust Thatcher and introduce PR.

The issue of principle in the present discussion is not electoral pacts but the means of effecting a long-overdue constitutional reform which the CP has supported for over 40 years, albeit with insufficient enthusiasm.

This is an essentially democratic project. If the opposition parties could agree to suspend their differences on other issues for a single election to a short parliament, they could doubtless agree also on a limited platform of short-term policies designed to bring the wildest excesses of Thatcherism to a halt. If the project succeeded, they could then fight the immediately ensuing PR election on their own policies.

Given the widespread support for PR among the other opposition parties, the problem becomes one of convincing the Labour Party of its need for this reform. The biggest objection will be that PR offers the almost certain prospect of coalition government for years to come. But given the balance of class forces, a majority of seats based on a minority of votes is an inadequate foundation for carrying through a socialist programme. The minimum condition is a majority of the popular vote: no more difficult to achieve under PR than under the present system. ●

Steve Ruhemann, Bingley

Robotisation

Paul Johnson (*MT* January) in 'Old Age Creeps Up' loses sight of two central matters of principle. He appears to be assuming that present human population densities are not excessive, but rather less than is 'necessary' in order to 'pay for' inevitable population ageing. But it is generally accepted that excessive population densities are the main cause of the ecological catastrophe towards which we are now heading.

A main consequence of industrial revolution has been a world population increasing to several times the natural carrying capacity of the environment. Unless serious measures are taken to halt or even reverse this population growth, world population will double again in the next one or two generations.

Certainly more effective technical measures could alleviate the environmental problems due to overpopulation. But are our children going to thank us for a world onto which modern technology has been used to squeeze the maximum possible number of bodies? Paul has overlooked the principle of materialist biology: that 'there is nothing an animal can do that a machine could not be designed to do'. If true, this seems to imply the possibility of complete robotisation of industrial production. Robotisation is already becoming a major factor in the evolution of society.

Robotisation implies the absence of any real limit to the wealth per person possible, for world populations of, say, a fifth of what they now are. Keeping such reduced populations in comfortable leisure (including space for some of the vast forests lost in the last century, restored to their former glory?), should no longer be a problem. ●

Frank Quelon, Dyfed

Grand Hotel Abyss

I enjoyed reading Dick Hebdige's article on postmodernism (*MT* January) and I was interested to see him refer to the 'chilly extremism' of Baudrillard. This seems to me an apt phrase, although I would go further and say 'cynical' and 'irresponsible' as well. Witness the following statement from *The Ecstasy Of Communication*: 'Let us be stoics: if the world is fatal, let us be more fatal than it. If it is indifferent, let us be more indifferent. We must conquer the world and seduce it through an indifference that is at least equal to the world's.'

It is comforting for a Western intellectual, such as Baudrillard, to be able to adopt this 'stoical' attitude, but it is a position which is not available to those who are at the receiving end of exploitation in the 'post-modern' world, especially those in the Third World who are the very real victims of that American capitalism whose 'energy' Baudrillard seems so keen to celebrate.

Georg Lukács once referred to Adorno as having 'taken up residence in the "Grand Hotel Abyss" – a beautiful hotel, equipped with every comfort, on the edge of an abyss, of nothingness, of absurdity', where 'the daily contemplation of the abyss between excellent meals or artistic entertainments can only heighten the enjoyment of the subtle comforts offered.'

This description was unfair to Adorno, but it is perfectly applicable to the position adopted by Baudrillard (witness the self-obsessed interview in the same issue of *Marxism Today*). If this is the 'high priest of postmodernism', then God help us all. ●

Chris Pawling, Sheffield

People Before Profit

What courage to find marxism itself chailenged in, of all publications, *Marxism Today*. Also helpful to read (*MT* January) an analysis of a post-modern marxist concept, 'the production of meaning', by Dick Hebdige. I'm not convinced though, that Dick's new symbolic 'Britishness' is anything more than enterprise punks on English postcards representing Britain's latest role in disorganised global capitalism.

Then again, maybe disorganised global capitalism can bring about changes needed to end war, apartheid, poverty and pollution and develop individual freedoms and social democracy in a better way than organised communism. People before capital and political profit?

Food for the sort of new times thinking that Gorbachev and colleagues are not afraid of. ●

MJ Weller, London

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LETTERS

Sacrificing Women

I wish Suzanne Moore and Stephen Johnstone (*MT* Jan) had managed to get Jean Baudrillard to describe in more detail his image of sacrificing a woman in the desert. Could the woman be Mrs Thatcher, Princess Di or Nancy Reagan? Could she be a 'bag-lady' or somebody terminally ill? How would she be earning her living? Would she be a mother or a grandmother? Would she have volunteered to be sacrificed? Or would she have been paid or kidnapped? Would she be African, Asian, American, Middle Eastern or European? And how would she be sacrificed? With his own bare hands? A ritualistic dagger? Or with the help of professional killers and things? ●

Fran Hazelton, London

Alliance of Predators

From the point of view of those who wish for a different society from the one the present government hopes to forge, the idea of an electoral pact (*MT* Feb), as against an alignment of the Left, seems a great one-off fix, whereupon the luscious fraternal fighting can break out again after victory – or defeat.

There is no moral basis for any sort of electoral pact if it's solely designed to defeat the present government. It would be an alliance of predators rather than of policy. I speak with some legitimacy because I was one of the 20 or so Liberals who voted against a merger with the SDP, not seeing how we could present a national programme to the voters when Dr Owen was determined to carry his quite different defence policy into the new entity.

I do not see how the SLD could forge a fully-fledged electoral pact with Dr Owen's SDP. It is not even clear – even to radical Liberals like me – that the SLD has more in common in political (versus emotional) terms with Labour than with the wet wing of the Conservative Party.

Under these conditions, pacts can only come on the floor of the House of Commons after an election, and on specific legislation such as constitutional reform, housing, the environment or regional development. ●

Lesley Abdela, Wiltshire

Man's Best Friend

Jeremy Cherfas and his friend, Sam, have got it quite wrong (*MT* February). Man's best friend is this woman's serious environmental hazard.

Five and a half years of push-chair-wheeling has taught me a lot about dogs and their owners and none of it seems to be pleasant. Most of what I know sticks to wheels and then to the carpets of our house. Parks are foul and our bin-bags ripped to shreds. One of my children had an ice-cream taken out of his hand and the other has been bitten. We are woken by our neighbour's howling beast and have to clear his droppings from our steps.

This in itself is all quite enough, but the problem has a more serious dimension. At least a hundred children a year are blinded as a result of dog-borne parasites in the UK. The domestic dog is eating its way through enough protein to feed any number of malnourished third-world children and provides pet-food manufacturers with absolutely monstrous profits.

My children and I agree when we consider that the real problem is that people are anthropomorphising dogs, so giving them a consideration that isn't accorded to many humans. Dogs, it seems, have become status symbols for idiots and offer little in return (except for the very few) that wouldn't be better got by developing mature relationships with human beings. ●

Janis Griffiths, Glamorgan

Entertaining Information

Still shivering after being introduced to the 80s 'hyper-reality' (*MT* January) and the observation that 'competition at the bottom end of the tabloid market has led editors to abandon the distinction between entertainment and information', I opened *The Guardian* (Jan 6, 1989) and read its piece on the downing of two Libyan jets. This erudite and serious appraisal titled 'Ace Pilots Gun Their Way Into Roll Of War Heroes', informed me that 'the battle ... was more akin to a game of playground tag ... than films such as Richard Gere's *An Officer And A Gentleman* and Tom Cruise's *Top Gun*'. What price 'Libyans Eat Alien' next? ●

Paul Walker, Cleveland

No Solutions

John Gribbin's piece on the 'greenhouse' effect (*MT* February) was trivial and disappointing. This environmental problem surely requires more serious consideration than a discussion of a reversal in the current position of the Soviet Union and the USA vis à vis grain production and consumption. Gribbin was also guilty of the sin for which he condemned the government: talking about the problem without offering solutions. Not once in the whole article did he discuss the sort of measures that could be taken to reduce the severity of greenhouse warming, or, possibly, prevent it. ●

Leslie Masters, Coventry

Ritual Of The Gallows

Reg Kray's touching account of the last moments of Flossie Forsyth's life (*MT* February) did not mention that Forsyth met his death at the end of the rope only because the prosecution were able to prove that the unfortunate youth who was killed had been robbed.

At that time, 1959, murder was carefully packaged into categories, and two of the categories for which death by hanging was the punishment were the murder of a policeman or woman in the course of their duties and murder in pursuance of theft. The evidence of robbery against Forsyth was very weak – but then when British justice is bent on retribution it does not have to be anything else.

After a long and hard battle, Sydney Silverman in 1965, with the aid of the Wilson government, achieved the passage of his Abolishment Of Capital Punishment Act. At last the horrible ritual of the gallows, the noose and the clergyman's incantations was over. But if the Blessed Margaret has her way it will be restored with all its gory detail. ●

Sid Gregory, London

Footnotes

How are those among us who have not been to university in the last decade, and who are unfamiliar with the jargon of structuralism, to comprehend the marxist debate in your magazine? I must be one of many who, unable to 'deconstruct' your articles, will buy a less elitist rag. ●

Josie Harmin, Cleveland

Thank you for printing the excellent article by Göran Therborn (*MT* February) which presented the modern argument for political and economic change with laser-sharp clarity.

At the risk of environmental damage, I suggest the article be put in leaflet form and air-dropped to every inhabitant of the planet. ●

Dan Rubinstein, London

Post-Marxism Today?! ●

Richard Ingram, Wolverhampton

Editorial Note: We welcome your letters to add to discussion. Please send them to *MT* Letters Page, 16 St John Street, London EC1M 4AY. Brevity means you are more likely to be published. We reserve the right to cut. ●

NICK NEWMAN

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New Times

Green Times

Thatcherism may command the political agenda of New Times, but the greens command its moral agenda. **Fred Steward** discusses why the green outlook is so in tune with the times

On the present period of new-right ascendancy, one of the most positive and encouraging developments is the emergence of green politics as the focus for a creative and engaging opposition. This success has been achieved by a diverse movement with little formal political power yet a compelling capacity to influence the political agenda. In Britain it remains unrepresented at parliamentary level yet the prime minister feels obliged to treat it with respect rather than contempt. In Brazil local landowners feel confident enough to kill a union organiser and rainforest champion yet internationally politicians compete to express their outrage. Why does green politics have such a purchase while its status appears so precarious in terms of established political and economic power? What is it that the greens express which makes them in tune with those same new times in which the Right has flourished and the Left has foundered?

The green outlook has many facets which reflect different features of the changing economic and cultural context. The new times are said to offer new opportunities for social diversity and individual choice. Some dimensions of green politics do indeed express aspects of change in which issues of individuality, diversity and choice figure very strongly.

Personal responsibility for the consequences of one's actions is a prominent theme on matters ranging from recycling newspapers to the purchase of fur coats. Decentralisation of economic power is expressed in relation to self-sufficiency and emphasis on small-scale local enterprise. Choice of new patterns of work and consumption for individual satisfaction and self-realisation are central to the green outlook. These aspects appear to reflect those broader economic and cultural shifts which in general have been appropriated by the Right.

Yet these issues represent only part of the green picture. In addition there is a striking renewal of collectivism, universalism and social purpose. The individual is seen in the context of a global identity, the human species. The ecology of the planet is given a primary status which informs all policy issues. Interdependence and sustainability set the terms for individual and social choice. The future of the planet is a fate shared by all and hence is the overriding focus for common purpose and action. The rise of green politics, therefore, also represents a pattern of change in which collective identity and universal values assume a new status and significance.

These two contrasting dimensions are both of fundamental importance to an understanding of current processes of change and an assessment of new political potentialities. Analysis must embrace the dynamic of their inter-relationship, not privilege one over the other.

Individuality and choice cannot be dismissed as peripheral to a new social purpose. Universal moral aspirations cannot be consigned to the conformist dustbin of bureaucratic industrialism. The reality is that both of these elements are present in the new context and the Left has been outflanked by political currents engaging with both. The Right has captured the terrain of economic modernisation and consumer choice. The greens now hold the high ground of moral vision and all-embracing social transformation.

The political options for the Left are neither a 'realism' based on accommodation with a selfish individualism or a new 'fundamentalism' reinstating benevolent centralism. Instead we need to combine the collective and the individual, common purpose and personal choice, in a new way. The greens offer some valuable insights into the possibilities.

At the heart of green concerns is the threat of environmental destruction. Implicit in this concern is the suggestion of a qualitative leap in the impact of industrial development, expanded consumption and technological change. Does this perception signify a new epoch in the environmental impact of the economy and technology? Most schemes for periodising industrial change concentrate on work and the production process rather than on its environmental effects. Environmental impact in itself is hardly new. Economic change throughout history has had such effects.

The rise of mass production carried with it a range of substantial and negative environmental effects. Air pollution from smoke, river pollution from toxic effluent, exhaustion of mineral and energy resources, despoilation of landscape through overexploitation, all took their toll. Such destructive consequences were gross and manifest yet in general were limited geographically and over time. Effects were usually confined within national boundaries and were evident within a short space of time. Causality was direct and immediate.

The postwar period has been marked by two striking developments concerning geography and time. The globalisation of industry and technology has dramatically increased our capacity for affecting the planetary biosphere. This is a consequence both of the scale of production and consumption and the speed of diffusion of technology into the world market. Product innovations ranging from motor cars to aerosol cans have global repercussions. In addition, new technologies like nuclear power embody features which transcend national boundaries in the event of catastrophe. Human capacity to affect the planetary environment appears to have reached a new level.

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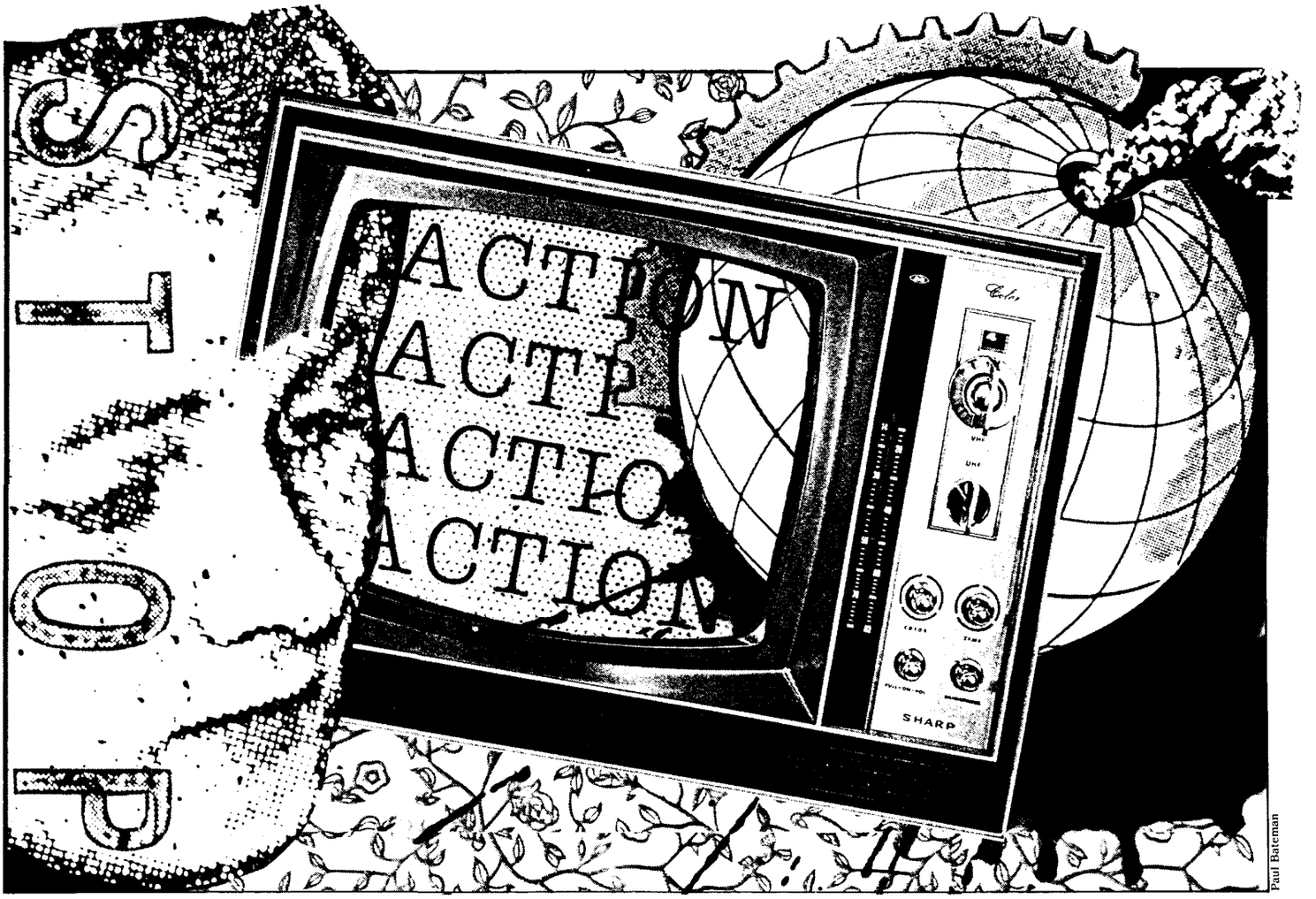

Paul Bateman

Accompanying this has often been an increased difficulty in ascertaining the relationship between cause and effect. Consequences are expressed way beyond both the workers in the industry and the direct consumers of its products. A local event like a nuclear plant melt-down has an impact across the world through the radiation released. Individual consumption decisions on the use of aerosols containing chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) can affect planet-wide systems such as the ozone layer. Environmental impacts become increasingly cumulative and indirect. They are expressed over new and unpredictable time spans. Actions which in the past appeared sustainable – for example the use of the oceans as a source of food or a destiny for waste – may rapidly precipitate critical thresholds for the survival of species like seals and whales. Events in the present such as burning fossil fuels and deforestation could have dramatic consequences for future generations through the greenhouse effect. On all of these issues the evidence is contested, yet the potential threat is one of unprecedented enormity.

The new epoch carries with it new problems of handling uncertainty and exercising political power. These have engendered a crisis in the structure of regulation, a characteristic of the earlier order. The rise of mass production was accompanied by social pressure in response to environmental impacts which led to reasonably effective regulations. This occurred through the political and legal channels of the nation-state. The clean air acts got rid of the London smogs, planning legislation controlled the balance between town and country. Such national legislation was accompanied by the growth of administrative structures in which rationality and expertise were deemed the province of the professional, and social interests were confined to indirect representation. It was the era of the expert committee in which consensus was based on detachment and reason. Partisanship and explicit values were seen as introducing emotion and irrationality into a political process that would best succeed without them.

'The globalisation of industry and technology has dramatically increased our capacity for affecting the planetary biosphere'

The new features of environmental concern have challenged these established political forms. There are limits to the capacity of national sovereignty to deal with threats to the environment. Priority needs to be given to new supranational forums for the resolution of such issues. Inter-dependence at a global level has to inform the international agenda. The growth of uncertainty and conflict between experts as to the severity of environmental risk has led to a recognition of the limits of rationality alone and an enhanced status for explicit values. There is dissatisfaction with existing structures premised on professional exclusiveness and expert consensus. Instead there is pressure for an acknowledgement of uncertainty, for explicit representation of diversity in the regulatory process and for a commitment to pre-empting indirect and subtle threats.

The power of green politics is that it has responded to these changed circumstances and articulated a political philosophy and practice in a novel and imaginative way. This has been expressed by the emergence of a new political culture which embraces a notion of individual responsibility along with one of collective strategy. The new green organisations of the 1970s, such as Friends Of The Earth, Greenpeace and the Green Party, embody this culture and have shown a unique capacity to bridge the gulf between transformative politics and the reality of existing political institutions. At the individual level people have shown an ability to radically change their habits and make new choices about personal consumption. The green consumer is no longer an eccentric but a growing and sought-after market segment. Regulatory agencies have been stimulated into action through effective use of established channels of expert evidence and media briefings. The culture is both eclectic and integrative, individualist and collective. Demands are made equally on personal lifestyle, government action and industrial management. Criticisms of bureaucratic rationality are accompanied by skilful

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Platitudes won't win Labour the next election. Sections of the Left are seeking a different way. *Facing up to the Future, Charter 88,* growing support for PR and devolution, *Samizdat's* call for a "Popular front of the mind" are all reflections of this new direction. The Communist Party has now proposed an electoral agreement to defeat Thatcher. To turn this proposal into a reality requires a new politics of common purpose, combining radical rethinking and broad campaigning.

The Communist Party offers its members just such a dynamic combination: why not join us and help build the new politics.

☐ **YES** send me a copy of the Communist Party's proposal for an electoral agreement.*

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use of expertise and reason in the presentation of arguments which affirm explicit environmental values.

The openness and effectiveness of the political style is clearly underpinned by a clarity of common purpose. It is the combination of these elements which begs analysis. The timeliness of its practice is matched by a resonance for its philosophy. What is it that fosters a receptiveness to a new 'world-outlook' at the same time as reinforcing a commitment to choice and diversity? What ideas and values lie at its root?

Green thinking draws on a clear moral stance which is both a radical challenge to the existing order yet in tune with the times. There are two central values to the green outlook and these inform a range of green social and economic policies as well as specifically environmental issues. One of the core values is an emphasis on the importance of qualitative as opposed to quantitative objectives as a measure of social progress. The quality of life expressed through health and environment takes precedence over the quantity of material wealth. The wholesomeness of air, food and water are more central than the size of the pay packet. The beauty of the environment overrides the growth in GNP. Job satisfaction and the fulfilment of mixing work and leisure to personal taste are considered more important than restoration of conventional full employment. The other core value concerns the primacy of nature over society. Human goals of all kinds are seen as dependent on the integrity and diversity of the biosphere. As a result a politics concerned solely with the position of different social groups or the relationship between human beings, however radical, is seen as implicitly subordinating nature, the source of life, to a secondary position.

It is these core values which inform a series of alternative policies to the prevailing 'industrialism' of both Right and Left. The bureaucratic, productionist structures of the past are unable to pursue these values. Neither are macro-economic policies confined to quantitative redistribution. 'Socialist modernisation', conceived in terms of conventional economic goals such as increased competitiveness of a national economy, does not address such questions even if it embraces new democratic forms on the path to these goals. The new scope for choice between technological options must be adopted not simply as a better route to the fulfilment of diverse consumer needs but as enabling an environmentally-viable path to be followed. A reassessment is needed of the fundamental objectives of a democratic economy and the adoption of broad strategic goals embodying the principles of quality of life and primacy of nature.

The exercise of choice within such a strategic framework is to be made not by centralised institutions, however benevolent, but through a decentralised economic and political system relying on active individual consent by citizens. Such an approach has often appeared individualistic and utopian, neglecting the realities of power and of the need for firm central direction. Yet there is little doubt that such views now seem more timely and strike a more serious popular note than before. A decade ago suggestions that wind, wave and sun were serious options for energy policy were ridiculed. Now they receive public money and scientific attention. Concern over food processing and additives was seen for many years as the preserve of the crank. Now consumer pressure has put it at the centre of political attention.

Two factors have contributed to this change. The new information technology makes it possible to combine decentralised activities within a wider, even global, strategy to a degree hitherto inconceivable. The capacity to handle complex information with speed enables an interactive flow between centre and locality, producer and consumer, organisation and individual. It becomes more feasible if such a technical path is chosen to combine central purpose with individual choice. There is also a spread of education and access to knowledge via the mass media and international communications technology. This has opened a global perspective to the individual which was inaccessible to previous generations. The consequences of technological change have therefore been double-edged. Although human power to affect the planet has been unleashed, the capacity for local control of technology and the economy has been enhanced. These factors have combined to make the phrase 'think global, act local' actual rather than rhetorical.

'Too many on the Left still see the ideals and culture of the greens as a risky departure from the rationality and progress that they hold dear'

The local dimension of a politics that embraces the global and the individual is expressed in a new emphasis on 'community'. This encompasses a desire for a smaller, more human scale of economic organisation and social activity. It also embodies a powerful sense of tradition and the maintenance of links with the past. This identification with cultural continuity has been prominent in the recent debates on the built environment which reflect the urban dimension to green politics. Prince Charles has been an exponent of a desire shared by many environmentalists for a smaller scale to our immediate environment and for the preservation of tradition and identity through building to blend with the past. The arguments surrounding this are often trapped in rigid categories. Classical and modernist architects readily wield the traditional philosophies of conservatism or progress to legitimate their choice. In the tv series *Visions Of Britain*, the classicist rested his case on conservative philosopher Roger Scruton's explanation of why change was a bad thing and the modernist quoted Marx and Freud to show that change was good. Yet the intent of the emphasis on community and continuity is not to narrow horizons or seek to remain static. Instead intimacy and heritage are seen as legitimate values within a global and dynamic perspective.

'Nature' and 'tradition' are central to the green philosophy and represent a challenge to modernism. Modernism's philosophy rested on the virtues of 'technology' and 'change', both of which were embraced by the Left in its vision of social progress. The epoch of Fordist industrialism was accompanied by the rise of modernism and the Left. The new times are accompanied by a challenge to those values expressed in the rise of the greens. Does such a challenge represent a return to the reactionary or romantic ideals of an even earlier era?

There seems no *a priori* reason why it should be linked to political conservatism. Choice over future paths of economic and technological change could give greater weight to nature and community without denying the value of human technical endeavour or succumbing to social stasis. The new times are an opportunity for the elaboration and assertion of such values in the context of material progress and social and personal liberation.

It is a synthesis of a new type that is required. Not simply modifications confined within the framework of modernism. The modernist categories of technology and change have indeed altered. 'Technology' has shifted from process to product, standardisation to differentiation, production to consumption. 'Change' has been transformed to accommodate social diversity rather than homogeneity, strategy rather than planning, consumer choice rather than state ownership. But whatever the importance of these insights, in themselves they remain too constrained. They need to be accompanied by a re-evaluation of the fundamental objectives of political change prompted by the values of green politics.

The relationship between the green perspective and that of the Left remains a problematic one. The successful combination of 'greening' and 'modernisation' is a formidable challenge. The socialist and environmental movements come from contrasting trajectories. Yet in terms of political culture there is a strong affinity between the new analysis of the Left and the practice of the greens. Too many on the Left still see the ideals and culture of the greens as a risky departure from the rationality and progress that they hold dear. Yet in reality these new aspirations challenge the one-sided interpretation of the older values made by both Right and Left within the industrialist order. The green movement is in advance, not retreat, and shows the opportunities as well as the threats within the times ahead. ●

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New Times

A Tale of New Cities

The cities of the Western world are at a turning point. They are being remade. **Geoff Mulgan** argues that we need a new vision of what they can and should be like

The Right has never felt at home with the city. For the old Right cities have traditionally been the source of insurrectionary mobs and subversive ideas. For the new Right cities are the places where their narrow individualism and denial of society seem most out of place, irrelevant to the collective problems of transport and health, clean air and water, green spaces and safe streets. It is no coincidence that it is in the cities that the flaws of Thatcherism have been most apparent, as riots simmer and erupt and as transport systems collapse; nor is it any coincidence that despite the prime minister's repeated call for a dynamic new approach to the inner city, no vision has been forthcoming.

The Right's historic unease makes it all the more remarkable that the Left has so clearly failed to sustain a coherent city politics. Although the Left in Britain evolved out of the cities, first implemented its ideas in municipal politics and still controls nearly all the major cities of Britain, it too has no real vision of city life in the 21st century: of how cities can be good places to live, and of how a balance can be struck between collective consumption and diverse identities. In other countries the Left has often used cities as long-term showcases, models of planning, redistribution and civic responsibility. In the Britain of the 1980s by contrast, the urban Left has seemed more interested in using control of cities as a stepping stone to national power, a means rather than an end.

There is also a deeper historical problem. Though Britain has long been a very urban society, its experience of large cities is relatively recent by comparison with southern Europe or north Africa. Despite the strong civic traditions of cities like Birmingham, Manchester or Leeds, Britain has none of that subterranean memory of a time before the consolidation of national states that gives a special resonance to the city politics of a Barcelona, Milan or Hamburg. On both Left and Right, particularly in England, there has always been a powerful nostalgic attachment to a rural past of small towns and cottages. For William Morris and Blatchford, Hardie and Macdonald, the city was at best a necessary evil. Come the millenium, the satanic mills would be levelled, the green and pleasant land restored. In the late-19th century many English socialists followed Kropotkin in believing that electricity would remove the need for concentrations of work and housing around sources of energy, returning society to a purer era of rural workshops; a promise that is echoed today in the telecommunications-inspired electronic cottages of writers like Alvin Toffler. There is a long tradition, in other words, of coping with the problems of the city through escape.

But as the city again moves to the head of the political agenda, placed

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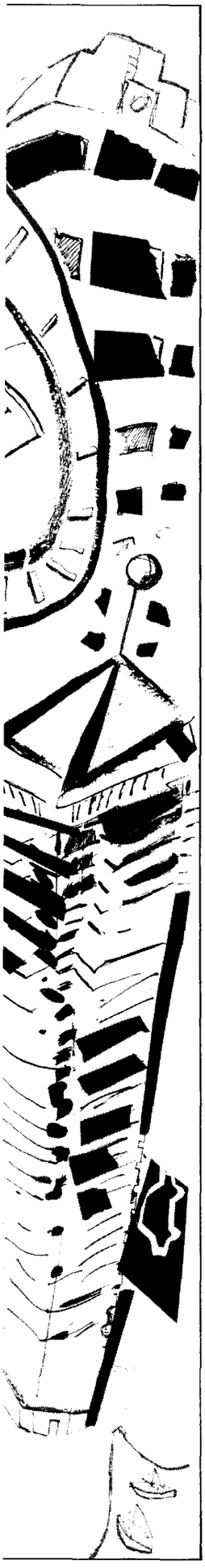

Sarah McMenemy

there less by politicians than by a widespread public unease about the direction of city life, physical ugliness and insecurity, endemic inequality and the decay of infrastructures, it is clear that this approach is inadequate. Over half the world's population now lives in cities and even previously declining cities like London are growing again. Cities will survive the effects of telecommunications just as they survived the effects of electricity, and with them will survive the debate about how cities can be made to work, about what makes them good places to live in, and about how they can become more equal and more shared places.

In this article I will argue that the end of the 1980s may come to be seen as a historic moment for the cities of the First World. Tendencies towards global sameness in product brands, retailing chains and cultural products are being matched by equally powerful tendencies to favour whatever is local and different. Paradoxically, the integration of European countries into the single market of the 1990s is giving regions and cities a higher profile. Vast new building works (well criticised by David Harvey in January's *MT*) and rapid change in the economy of cities have coincided with a new interest both in the physical architecture of the city and in its soft architecture, its feel and atmosphere, its social networks and its sense of community and citizenship.

The Left has been very good at criticising what's happening to the city, at revealing its imbalances and its new oppressions; first the London Docklands Development Corporation and now the urban development corporations, the vast developments in Canary Wharf and now Kings Cross have all been subjected to devastating critique. What has proved much harder is the articulation of a practical alternative. Amidst the chaos of new industries and old, and of attacks from central government that leave local councils hard-pressed just to stand still, this is perhaps not surprising. But some of the elements of a new vision of the city are slowly beginning to emerge.

Alongside new policies for housing, transport and education it is becoming clear that the new vision of the city will also emphasise its nature as a means of communication, a place where people meet, talk and share experiences, where they think and drink together. Policies for the creation of industrial districts and 'milieux', for civic videotex systems and town cards, and for vibrant evening economies of entertainment and retailing, show that city councils are much better placed for the kinds of holistic approach that make the ecology of a city work than either national governments or untrammelled markets. Like most of the urban social movements of the past this emerging vision of the city combines the three themes of collective consumption, local control and the preservation of identity against the one-way flow of international, standardised information and images. As yet it remains only half-formed, caught in the contradictory trends of the city economy, and ever more marked inequalities of access to the pleasures of city life. Cities will probably get worse before they get better. But in the long run it suggests that cities have the potential to develop as political units more human in scale than the nation-state and better able to offer insulation from the volatilities of a turbulent world economy.

A good starting point for any analysis of cities is their position within the economic system. It has become a cliché that within a more global economy, national economic boundaries have increasingly lost their significance. Cities and regions negotiate directly with transnational corporations and institutions (whether IBM or the International Olympic Committee). The economy of a city or region can evolve directly counter to the lines of development of the nation: obvious examples include London's role as an international financial centre, and Silicon Glen's role as a staging post for transnational computer companies entering the European market. Many cities have lost their close relationship with a hinterland of countryside and towns, becoming instead part of a more extensive, less rooted kind of economic life, competing for footloose capital, for manufacturing plants, research laboratories and corporate headquarters. Others evolve as the core of industrial districts, like Munich and parts of Bavaria, the M4 corridor or Kumamoto on Kyushu, again often with little relationship to the surrounding region.

Communications technologies have played a decisive role. The great power of capital has always been its ability to choose, to decide where to locate and when to withdraw. The satellite, cable and microwave greatly enhance this mobility and the leverage it confers, allowing for much more sophisticated location policies: mental labour can be separated from production, skilled labour from unskilled, service tasks from manufacturing ones. Logical organisation becomes more important than physical proximity. In the financial sector, while head offices tend to remain in the city centres, back office operations are moved to the suburbs and the more routine operations are removed either to peripheral towns or to countries like Barbados, offering cheap labour for routine data processing (the phenomenon of telecolonialism).

A complex economic geography is unfolding. A few cities have emerged as world cities, linked by the transoceanic networks of fibre-optic cable. Cities like Los Angeles, London, Tokyo, Hong Kong and Singapore increasingly function as hubs in world financial markets, as concentrations of the 'advanced producer services' of advertising, consultancy and law that service the transnationals, and of the low-wage service and manufacturing sectors that support them. Financial services, at first glance the most footloose of all industries and the most dependent on the telecommunications that allow businesses to disperse, remain clustered around a handful of streets in London, Tokyo and New York. Banks still cling to the prestige of a central location, and managers fear exclusion from the dense informal networks of the city centre.

In the industrial age, the great cities were defined by their position within systems of material flow. Cities like Liverpool, Newcastle and Glasgow, Pittsburgh and Chicago were located near deep-sea ports, on major waterways such as the Great Lakes or the Rhine, near railways and roads, and within easy reach of supplies of energy. Cities could be understood as material switching centres that processed materials into new forms. Production was labour and energy intensive, and was limited by access to both. Today the economy of the city can be better understood by its position as a centre for switching information and knowledge. Much of the new manufacturing has moved to smaller factories and industrial zones on the city periphery, to greenfield sites and new towns like Stevenage or Telford. In the larger cities an information economy has arisen alongside older ones based on manufacturing and service. Within this economy the key scarcities are no longer energy and labour but rather knowledge and creativity, and the key exports are knowledge products rather than material ones. In New York, for example, legal services overtook clothing as the city's primary export-earner at the end of the 1970s.

The redefinition of the city as a system for switching information is highly visible. Across Britain satellite and microwave dishes proliferate and streets are dug up to lay fibre cables. London's Docklands, the point where materials once came and went, is now centred around the teleport, a cluster of satellite and microwave dishes, receiving and transmitting information. New York has the world's most advanced teleport, built by the city administration and the port authority on Staten Island: through a fibre optic network it links Wall Street to the outside world, completely bypassing the local public network, an 'executive highway' for communications. The changing physical infrastructure of communication is permeating the physical fabric of city life. It is estimated that 30% of the cost of new office buildings in central Tokyo is now accounted for by electronics, control systems for heating, lighting, security and communication. The 'smartness' of a house or office has become a decisive selling point.

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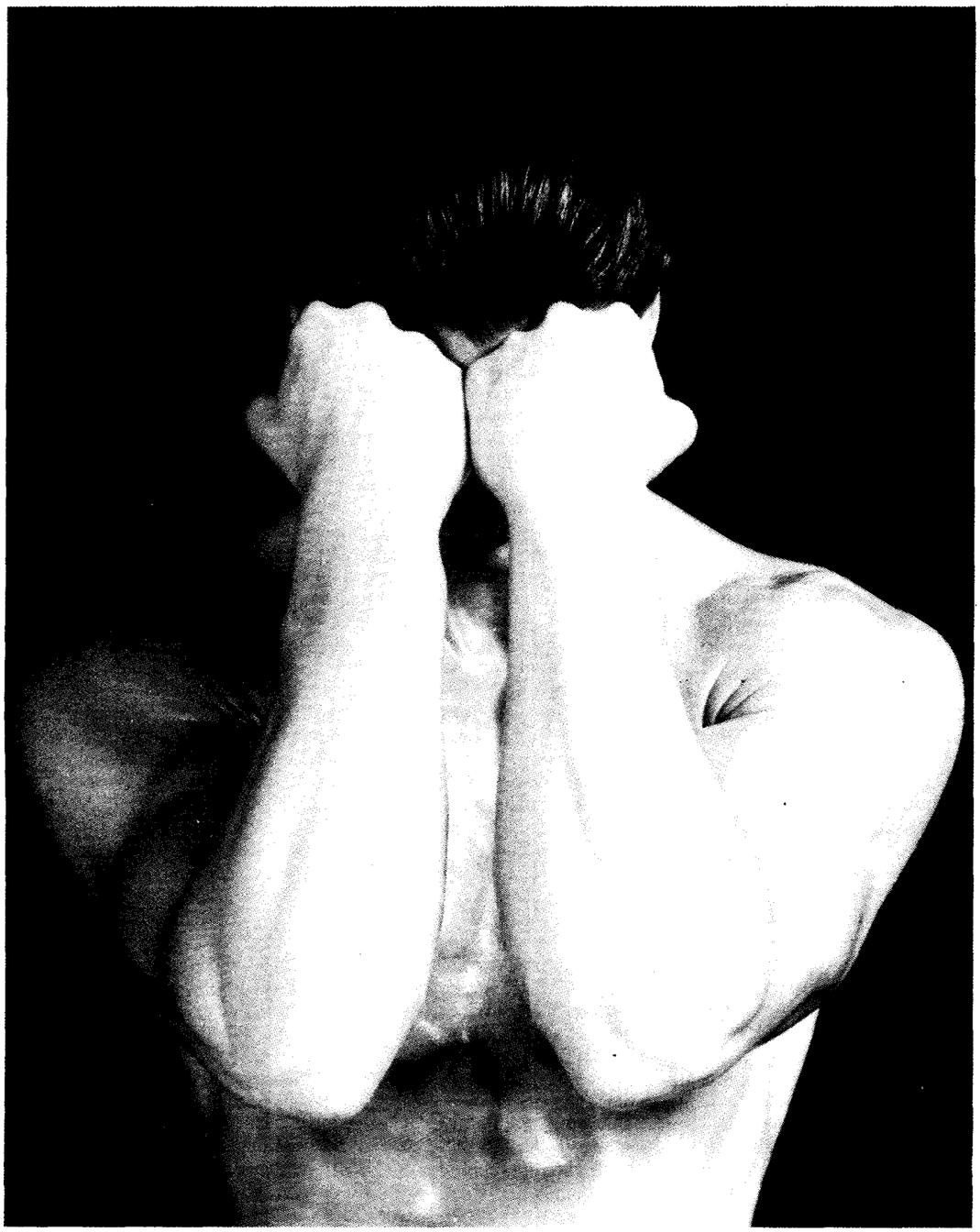

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'The changed image of a city like Glasgow makes it easier for firms like BP to persuade their staff to relocate there'

This new emphasis on smart communications infrastructures has also inspired some of the bolder utopian experiments of the 1970s and 1980s. The American 'wired city' movement that grew out of Lyndon Johnson's social programmes promised to use technology to build participatory, community-based cities. Utopian dreams fused with the more prosaic interests of telecommunications companies in large-scale experiments like Hi-Ovis in Japan, US projects like QUBE in Columbus to Project Victoria in California, and Biarritz in France, each of which linked homes to an array of interactive services, such as video-on-demand, community information and instant referenda. These 'teletopias' and 'telecommunities' were built not only as test beds for technology but also out of a faith that technology could be used to recreate communities disrupted by the fragmentation of the traditional city, bringing 'neighbourhood without propinquity'.

Despite often confused goals, some of the projects hinted at how a communications infrastructure could sustain new kinds of social relationship: health training and distant education projects on cable television, teleshopping for the old and disabled, on-line access to councils and assemblies (as in the California State Assembly) and videophones for housebound women are all examples. Unfortunately few sponsors, whether private or public, have had the will to sustain the experiments: QUBE, Hi-Ovis and Biarritz are all either closed or much reduced in scope. The real 'wired cities' of the late 1980s, such as Aberdeen or Coventry in Britain, are based on relatively old-technology (coaxial copper), privately-owned cable systems that do little more than deliver international television channels such as Sky and Lifestyle to a small minority of households.

Yet the long-term promise of the wired cities experiments is undeniable. In France, nearly 200 cities, most run by the Left, now offer a wide range of information on videotex, often providing possibilities for interaction, such as polls on local issues, and systems for finding information about housing opportunities or making a reservation at the local municipal theatre. The better ones have tried to create systems of two-way communication rather than simply dumping propaganda on an inert citizens. Grenoble has developed probably the most sophisticated set of tools for communicating with its citizens, an approach which has been vindicated by record turnouts for local referenda on such issues as tram policies.

Another example of the use of technology as a tool for asserting the identity of the city and its citizens is the town card, using 'smart card' technology similar to that used in credit cards and now being developed for satellite tv subscription. In the 1990s, rather than simply being private tools of consumption and debt like the Access or Visa, these cards could be given to everyone as a citizen's right, offering scope for organising access to civic facilities (swimming pools, theatres etc,), for cheap shopping (as retailers give discounts to local people) and for referenda. Already cards like the Thamesdown Gold Card or the Wakefield Passport to Leisure are being used to offer discounts to the unemployed, pensioners or disabled. Wilmslow near Manchester offers a town credit card, used by 5,000 holders and supported by 170 retailers to encourage spending within the local economy. In the USA there are affinity cards, local credit cards which give a percentage of interest to local charities and regeneration projects. All could be extended and differentiated, offering distinct mixes of services to the different groups of the city, simultaneously fostering collective consumption and diverse identities.

In Britain cities long ago lost control over their own infrastructures. The privatisation of water and electricity will remove accountability even further. But the privatisation and break-up of the old utilities also serves as a reminder of the 19th-century municipal traditions of local control of electricity, trams, gas and telephones that preceded their consolidation into monopolies and their nationalisation. In the context of the wired city these traditions again become attractive, offering efficiency and accountability in ways that are impossible for privatised and nationalised utilities. It is surely significant that probably the most efficient part of the local telephone network in Britain is run by Hull Telephone Company, the last remaining municipal phone company, and a possible model for a future when British Telecom's local networks are placed under local control. In countries like Holland it has always been assumed that local councils and housing associations should play a leading role in building and running cable networks.

In Britain the private cable companies that are now being franchised city by city and borough by borough also unwittingly recreate the scope for local control of the communications infrastructure. Ideally, municipal control of the infrastructure would coincide with a much wider access to channels, as in the US with its hispanic, black and neighbourhood television channels.

If British cities have little direct control over their communications infrastructures they are at least able to influence their softer infrastructures, their environment of work, shopping and leisure. These soft infrastructures are turning out to be as crucial to the post-Fordist economy as fibre-optic cables and just-in-time networks. As cities compete for capital and skilled labour, they are also emerging as tools of local industrial policy. Education is particularly important, involving both the provision of a skilled and flexible workforce, and open academic institutions with which business can collaborate. The new economic geography of the knowledge economy has brought clusters of new industry around cities like Cambridge and the leading scientific universities. By 1985 there were 47 science parks in Europe, all attempts to create living communities around research and its application (and all dependent on public support).

As important as education is the overall environment of a city. Even the most powerful transnationals depend on their ability to attract the most skilled workers, who are even more mobile than capital, and who now increasingly demand an attractive physical location, a congenial and convivial setting within which to work and live. The success of the post-Fordist industrial districts such as Silicon Valley has focused attention on the economic role of milieu, the social atmosphere of an area and profession within which people develop new ideas. Transnational companies alone are unable to create environments of this kind. In the USA the dynamic districts of high technology emerged not in New York and New Jersey where IBM and AT&T concentrated thousands of PhDs, but rather in the more convivial and open environments of Palo Alto and Boston.

These lessons have not been lost on declining cities desperately seeking the means to attract new industries. Many have seen arts spending as one of the easiest ways to change the feel of the city and give it the appearance of conviviality. Spending on theatre groups, visual artists and concert halls could also be justified as a cheap way of creating jobs and masking the physical manifestations of decline. Murals on the walls of deserted factories somehow seemed to make economic collapse more acceptable. More recently, however, it has become clear that arts and cultural policies can do much more than that, that they too can be understood as part of a soft infrastructure supporting new industries.

In its recent study of the arts economy, the Policy Studies Institute estimated that each of the 14,735 arts jobs in Glasgow gave rise to a further 2.7 jobs because of spending by arts customers and organisations, with a similar figure applying in Merseyside. There was also a less quantifiable multiplier effect as the level of cultural provision brought in firstly restaurants and shops, and later higher value-added activities. The changed image of a city like Glasgow, designated as European City of Culture in 1990, makes it easier for firms like BP to persuade their staff to relocate there. Conversely, Birmingham's rather dismal cultural image was held to have seriously undermined its Olympic bid. Pittsburgh in Pennsylvania is often cited as the classic success story, a terminally run-down

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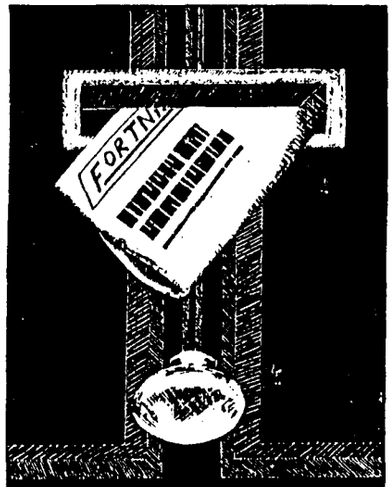

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industrial city that used arts as part of a broader strategy of regeneration that resulted in it being voted the most liveable city in the whole USA.

In Britain the use of art and culture as tools to reverse urban economic decline has been primarily associated with some of the larger Labour councils, particularly Glasgow, Liverpool and Bradford. Starting from gallery projects (like the Tate Of The North), garden festivals and museums (Bradford being the most successful example), councils have learnt that rather than simply supporting a thin layer of subsidised activity, they can also mobilise the economic potential of the arts more directly, to create thriving cultural industries producing designs, films, television programmes, comics and records. One of the ironies of the modern, global cultural industries is the cultural and economic success of the records, books and films most rooted in the decayed cities of the industrial age, Detroit and the Bronx, Liverpool and Sheffield. Relative decline can be turned to advantage. In the past, however, this advantage has rarely benefited the cities themselves. With many of their creative workers inadvertently funded by the DHSS and its counterparts, and lacking a local infrastructure of support, the profits of cultural success for a Human League or Frankie Goes To Hollywood went elsewhere, to London and New York rather than back into the urban economy.

'New forms of retailing are busting apart the ecology of the city centre'

Councils in Liverpool, Sheffield and elsewhere are now trying to develop the means to retain local control and reinvest profits in the local economy. Equally important, they are supporting the kind of environment within which the creation of ideas, images and designs can take place. Even more than fields like computing, the cultural industries depend on critical masses of activity, an organic and convivial milieu in which people emulate and argue, and eat and drink with each other. Examples include Sheffield with Red Tape studios and other projects in the music industry, Birmingham in the film and broadcasting industry with plans to create an 'audio-visual district', and Cardiff which seeks to promote itself as a media city, reflecting the fact that 4,500 are now employed in broadcasting, compared to 11,000 in the South Wales coalfield. Other examples include Glasgow in the visual arts, the most visible example of the use of arts in urban regeneration, Oxford in book publishing, and the emergence of East London as a thriving centre for the visual arts.

It has to be said that in some cases the use of art is suspect: there is a tendency to favour high arts, and to orient cultural provision to an executive and professional audience in a sterile wine-bar culture (witness the bitterness many feel towards Glasgow's claimed rejuvenation). The arts can also serve as a wedge to drive out the original inhabitants as property prices rise. This has been well-documented in New York where relatively impecunious artists have moved into an area, thereby gradually increasing its cultural cachet, and also its property prices. Developers have come to understand the dynamics of the 'loft living' phenomenon, and now seek to emulate it synthetically, using the artists and small galleries as unwitting tools. Similar phenomena are already apparent around the centres of some British cities. Properly conceived, however, cultural regeneration strategies can marry economic goals with the political one of giving expression to the marginalised communities, to those living on the run-down estates, and to the young and old of the ethnic communities which remain largely cut off from the mainstream of urban cultural life.

Nearly all the attempts to create cultural milieux and industrial districts have focused on the centre of cities. Despite occasional exceptions (like the recent, essentially suburban, movements of Acid House and Balearic), it is towards the city centre that cultural life has always tended to gravitate. Traditionally the centre of the city also acted as a magnet for shops, cinemas, pubs and restaurants. Areas like the West End of London sustain a vibrant evening economy where people congregate, perform, hang around and feel themselves plugged into the life of a city. In most towns and cities the same few streets collect both retailing and entertainment, together with the public buildings, the town hall, libraries, advice bureaux and churches.

But new forms of retailing are busting apart the ecology of the city centre. In 1987 it was estimated that an unprecedented 500 shopping-centre applications were being processed in Britain. Many aimed to move retailing out of the city centre, to malls and superstores on the city periphery, to carefully controlled environments, self-contained shopping capsules. Retailing becomes cut off from the rest of city life in more ways than one. New centres like the Metro in Newcastle tie the local retailing economy yet more closely into that of national and international chains, the Nexts, Boots and Crabtree And Evelyns. Rather than being rooted in the history and buildings of the old city, the vivid spectacle that shopping becomes is removed from the generality of city life, from public buildings, parks, theatres and pubs. Those deemed unproductive as consumers, particularly the young and the homeless, are often physically excluded from the new shopping centres.

This retailing-led restructuring of city life can prove extremely destabilising for the rest of the city. As retailing moves away from the city centre, like manufacturing before it, economically bereft wastelands are left behind. Physically and psychologically the centre decays, and, as fewer people use it for shopping or entertainment, its streets tend to become less safe, setting in motion a vicious spiral of decline. This trend is as damaging for the suburbs as for the city centre itself.

Some cities, particularly in North America, have tried to reverse the trend, with policies to rebuild the evening economy and emphasise their nature as social centres. Planning powers can be used to concentrate restaurants, entertainments and independent shops (as in Covent Garden or Faneuil Hall in Boston). Policing policies, late-night transport and good lighting can be harmonised to make it easier and safer to come into the city centre. Transport in the city centre can be free as in Denver. Busy streets can be shown to be safe streets, and to favour spending in the local economy, setting in motion a virtuous circle of improvement. Busy streets also make the city an easier place to live in, particularly for women who have become increasingly incarcerated in their own homes.[1] People can also be brought into the city by spectacular events. Alongside the idea of shopping as spectacle, cities can themselves be turned into spectacles, as in the vast pyrotechnic displays of Philip Alain-Huppert in Berlin, Algiers and Paris, Jean-Michel Jarre in the Docklands and Houston, the festivals of Rome and the GLC in the mid-1980s, or the modern counterparts of the ancient traditions of carnival that turn the city into a theatre and a world turned upside down.

Unfortunately, in Britain at least, there is a wide gulf between what is possible and what is likely. Few cities retain either the resources, the planning powers or the political will to move in these directions. In the immediate future, a more likely trend may be the recreation of the council as private corporation, as in Bradford, which in the past provided a model of how to use culture, with its tongue-in-cheek publication of the Bradford-English dictionary for tourists, and the building of the hugely successful Museum Of Film, TV And Photography. The current Conservative-run council in Bradford is now trying to project an idea of the city as a corporation providing a defined set of services to its 'consumers' and dividends to its shareholders.

But though we can denounce the trend to civic privatisation it has at least revealed just how emaciated the alternative civic and public traditions have become. The weakness of these traditions has also shone out clearly from the debates about architecture sparked off by Prince Charles, Rod Hackney, Richard Rogers and others. For though it is not hard to understand how the piazzas and boulevards of the past asserted an idea of public life, it is much harder to apply their lessons to

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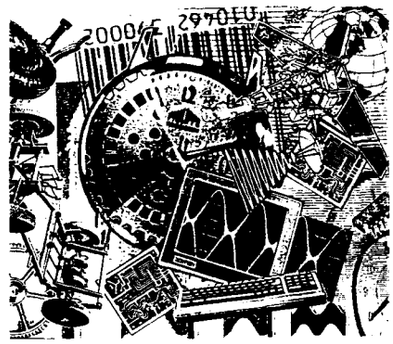

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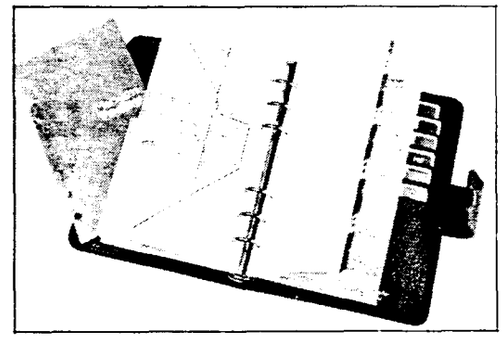

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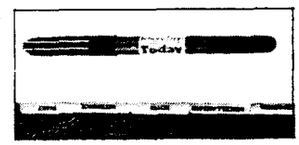

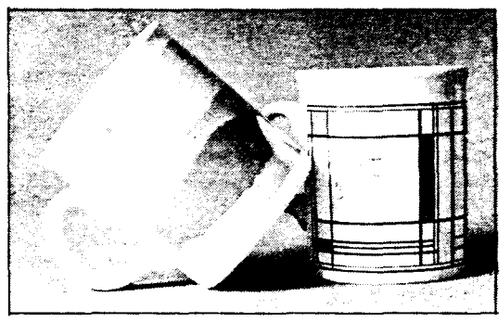

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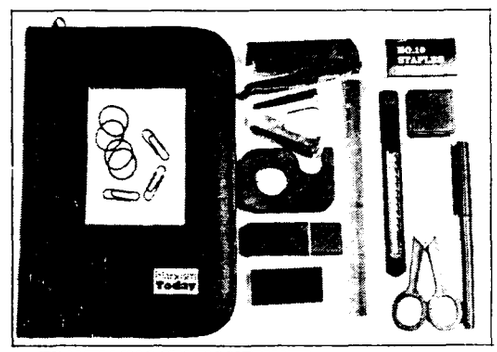

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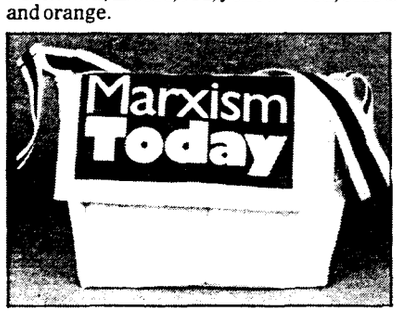

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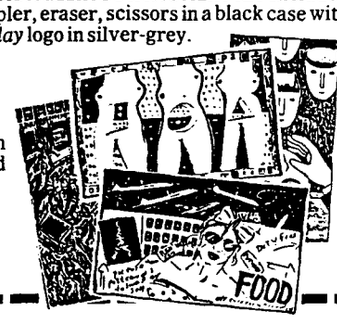

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cities riven by roads and studded with shopping precincts. It is worth recalling just how much the 19th-century civic tradition was carried through its physical forms.

The town halls and concert halls of the northern cities and, perhaps grandest of all, the town hall in Walthamstow in London (modelled on Versailles), and the public architecture of phone boxes, parks, clock towers and museums, all asserted an idea of the city as a shared and public space. Public provision was not philanthropic (that is to say provided by the rich for the poor) but could be for all, a means of creating social solidarity across classes through the shared use of transport, health and educational facilities. The vision of the city was one of active congregation and communication. These various traditions of public and civic architecture stood in stark contrast to the very different traditions of the temple, the arch and the palace, traditions which are sustained today in the monumental buildings of AT&T in New York, of NatWest and Lloyd's in London, and of Citicorp in many of the cities of Latin America, buildings which baldly assert their power and wealth.

'It is the world of the Dagmar rather than the Vic, a world of separate tables and hushed voices rather than a communal bar'

It is an indication of the weakness of socialism in the 1980s that it is almost impossible to conceive of a physical manifestation of socialism that could match Morrison's armies of red buses, the LCC's housing and schools or indeed stalinist gothic. The standardised public goods of the past certainly seem less appropriate in the 1980s.

Uncertainties about how to crystallise a vision of the city echo those of socialist politics more generally, the problems of achieving diversity without inequality, balance without excessive central planning. But it is also hard to visualise the physical forms of public life in the 21st century for another reason. This concerns the vulnerability of the very idea of public life to an era of electronic communication and what Raymond Wiliams described as mobile privatisation. Any plans for the creation of convivial cities inevitably find themselves struggling with a long erosion of the traditional political structures of the city within which people think, argue and organise.

Most of our conceptions of politics derive from the theories and practices of city life. The Greek *polis*, from which the word politics derives, was the city. The city was defined as a political entity, human in scale and shaped by the active interaction of its citizens. The city also was clearly understood to be shaped by its means of communication. Plato limited the size of the ideal city to the number of citizens who could be addressed by a single voice. Historically, democracy is closely associated with the rhythms of dense city life, from Athens and Ghent to Paris and Glasgow, instant and egalitarian in nature, and based on the streets, outside the factory gates and in the great squares of the city. The popular imagination of the Left is filled with images of public city life, with speakers on street corners, assertive crowds, soap boxes and barricades.

Yet it is precisely this kind of public life that now seems to be withering as public spaces are privatised for retailing developments and as other activities relocate to the home. Marx argued that capitalism was creating the seeds of its own downfall by concentrating people into factories and neighbourhoods where they would learn to organise and co-operate. Now, as late capitalism disperses people to new towns, smaller workshops and offices, and to the private pleasures of the living room these cultural roots of democratic, public life are under threat. The same communications technologies that permit the dispersal of production are also part of a broader privatisation of life: the relocation of leisure, work and democracy in the home. Some of the underlying pressures are economic: atomised, electronic communications are potentially much cheaper than socialised, face-to-face ones. Electronic, push-button democracy could be much cheaper than the ballot paper. The television costs 2p each hour compared to £2 at the cinema or more at a theatre: off-licence drink and take-away food are also cheap alternatives that have rapidly shifted the locus of social life.

This trend need not be entirely anti-social. Many people have discovered that the VCR can be a more social tool than the cinema: but what is changed is the nature of the social or public experience. The public is no longer general, but rather comes to be composed of a myriad small groups and of the spaces, described by Sharon Zukin as 'liminal', that lie between the public and the private, spaces like the apparently public piazza of a private office development, the street of a private housing development, the club that replaces the pub. It is the world of the Dagmar rather than the Vic, a world of separate tables and hushed voices rather than a communal bar.

There is a sense in which this trend away from a 'mass public' is irreversible. And it is in the city more than anywhere that people need privacy and the means of excluding others. But it is also here that the economic pressures towards providing a liveable city run the risk of generating divisive social consequences. The economic value of a convivial milieu for creative and scientific work provides an obvious incentive for developers and public authorities to support it. But conviviality for others, particularly for the underclass, the homeless and the unemployed, is if anything seen as threatening, to be cordoned off, monitored and policed (as in Coventry's new system of videos to monitor the city's shopping centre).

The old stereotype of a convivial working class counterposed to a domesticated suburban middle class, cossetted behind the lace curtains of detached houses, is turned on its head. Instead conviviality is offered to those for whom it has an economic value, those involved in the many forms of knowledge work, while those in less skilled work live an increasingly privatised existence, away from the city centres, and dependent on home-based entertainments. Marx's comment threatens to be turned on its head: perhaps in the 21st century it will be the dominant classes that learn the experience of co-operation and organisation in the wine bars of the City while the working class sits at home behind steel doors watching re-runs of those innumerable films that have portrayed the city either as a prison (*Escape From New York* etc,), as a jungle for survivalists (*Omega Man* etc,), or as an arena for vigilantes (*Death Wish 1-45*).

The dangers posed by such a rift in public life hardly need to be spelled out. There is a real sense in which the achievement of a new vision of the city and practical policies to realise it are essential if much of the political life of the larger cities is not to be reduced to the confines of the sound bite and the opinion poll. Yet the new vision of city life remains only half-formed. Though some of its themes are clear – new forms of collective consumption, the emphasis on liveability and conviviality, the idea of an interdependent ecology of city life, of the city as a means of communication, and of the city as a potential defence against the volatilities of an overconnected world – these still need to be fleshed out, experimented with and articulated.

Their ultimate promise is that out of the ashes of recession and deindustrialisation a new greener, and more social city can arise. For me, Tony Lane offers one of the best accounts of why a vision of this kind could become compelling. Lane foresees 'the Garden of Kent turned into a huge car park and railway siding for cross-Channel traffic and the rest of the Home Counties made impossible by the density of people crushing in to look for the jobs squeezed out of the North.' Early in the 21st century, he writes, 'horrified northern viewers will be seeing videotapes in which the metropolis and the South East are portrayed as a rat-maze of a modern urban hell. Life in Liverpool meanwhile, but also in Newcastle and Sheffield, Leeds and Bradford ... will be extraordinarily civilised. Relieved of overdensely populated acres, these will be spacious, open cities of tree-lined streets, coppiced corners and wooded hollows, teeming with wildlife where tenements and tower blocks once stood ...'.[2] ●

1 See for example the excellent CLES pamphlet: *City Centres, City Cultures*, 1988.
2 From Tony Lane's *Liverpool: Gateway of Empire*, Lawrence and Wishart, 1987.

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The Palazzo Vecchio, Florence, with Vasari's Uffizi Gallery

In Praise Of The Modern

What we build reflects the kind of society we are. Here, in a major essay published for the first time in Britain, leading architect **Richard Rogers** examines the crisis of modernity and offers a vision for the future

The making of patterns or order is instilled in all organisms. It is expressed in a flower, a spider's web or a symphony but only humankind *aspires* to impose order on the world. Architecture has developed from the need to order the world in space and time, and like all creative activities, is an expression of an epoch given form by the history of that epoch. When certain ordering patterns give pleasure to one or more of our senses, harmony is achieved.

Harmony, which is the essence of beauty, consists of the relationship of parts to each other and to the whole, though it does not necessarily include mathematically-related proportions. For example, an abstract painting by Jackson Pollock, which is sensuous to the eye, contains ordering principles but is clearly not based on structured proportions. Unlike science, beauty cannot be proved and does not become less valid over time, although perception changes and develops as new information is absorbed. These changes in perception imply that the past can never be recaptured in its totality, a fact often misunderstood, leading to a lack of aesthetic clarity resulting in a pastiche of the past created in the present.

Philosophical ideals are not timeless. Platonic form, based on a belief in the rationalistic ideal that all genuine questions must have one true answer, has given way to the pluralist view that there are only few, if any, timeless truths and that the only certainty is historical development and continuous change.

The categories and concepts around which every culture is built form an independent whole but vary radically across epochs. Any attempt to compare individual aspects of Greek, Roman, Florentine or 20th-century cultures, in isolation from the context which gives them their significance, is fraught with difficulties. However, this does not mean that the values embodied in diverse ways of life are entirely incommensurate. It is possible to understand and criticise other cultures and their values, since we have certain core, human and ethical values in common, although their importance changes with time and place.

The Renaissance

Confusion exists as to the reason and value of the use of classical language during the Renaissance. The re-examination of this phenomenon is important today, in a search for a way forward which encompasses a revaluation of the role of history.

It is not uncommon to use Brunelleschi, Donatello and Masaccio's rediscovery of ancient Rome in the early-14th century as a rationale for contemporary historicism. I believe that the 'historicist' interpretation of this profound development is incorrect, and that far from being conservative, the message of these Renaissance artists was revolutionary. Brunelleschi, for example, used fragments of the classical language to help him break away from the past in order to build a brilliantly innovative architecture, far different from both the preceding thousand years of medieval architecture and the earlier Graeco-Roman architects. He claimed to be creating a new architecture which contained a birth which implied, equally importantly, an end.

The Renaissance building, much like its early modern counterpart, stood majestically on its own. It used the existing small, haphazard, medieval urban fabric as a backcloth to set off the difference between itself and the immediate past. This has been conveniently forgotten by certain protagonists of the historical approach, who suffer from selective amnesia, a malaise commonly blamed on the pioneers of the modern movement.

Imitation And Contrast

Contrary to the generally-held opinion that contextual harmony can only be achieved by imitating the neighbouring styles, I have taken the view – and this is manifest in our work – that such harmony can be achieved by two contrasting means. Of course, as Claude du Chastillon's *Place des Vosges* or Nash's Regent's Park illustrate, harmony can be realised through the employment of a typology over a number of buildings constructed at a

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single time. However, an equally harmonious order can result from the juxtaposition of buildings of different epochs, each one being an expression of its own time.

This type of relationship is evident in King's College, Cambridge, which once stood isolated in a meadow and now is juxtaposed with medieval and classical buildings. The same relationship can be seen in St Mark's, Venice, where approaching from the sea, one is met with the most wondrous scenes of contrasting buildings: to the east, the classically-proportioned, four-square, arcaded, Byzantine Ducal Palace stands next to the glittering multi-domed Byzantine cathedral, one of the zaniest buildings of all times; while opposite, is Sansovino's white-stoned, classical library. The whole is pivoting round the slim, undecorated red-brick, green-pitched roof Campanile tower, standing isolated in space, setting off the square by its very difference to every other building.

In *Piazza della Signoria*, Florence, Vasari used the technique of contrast, as well as historical uniformity, when he was asked to build the Uffizi Gallery. He masterfully manipulated the space, incorporating all the latest visual and urban technology including forced perspective, at one end lining up the galleria on the slim tower of the medieval *Palazzo Vecchio* while at the other framing the beautiful river Arno. When, however, he came to repair and slightly extend the medieval *Palazzo Vecchio*, he studiously employed the architectural language of the past in such a way as to make the difference invisible. In each of the above three situations people of vision had the courage to put a further building of quality next to an already perfect building, thereby radically altering the balance of the existing spatial context.

It is disturbing to realise that had the conservative outlook of today prevailed, the magnificent buildings adjoining St Mark's Cathedral, King's College Chapel and *Palazzo Vecchio*, would have been denied planning permission on the grounds that their construction destroyed an already perfect architectural environment.

In considering whether to conserve or build, it is not possible to disregard today's greater consciousness of the role of the past and the effect of one building upon another, for clearly, beauty must be conserved. The only guide is for prejudice to be swept aside and for each situation to be judged on its visual and functional merits. Mistakes will be made – that goes without question – but if a carefully calculated, cultured approach is taken, damage will be limited and progress will be made towards creating living cities.

Far from being hostile to architectural conservation, I favour, on occasion, the extension or construction of period buildings which were planned but never built, or built but since destroyed. In our own work, we have aspired to emulate the versatility of approach that was exemplified in Vasari's treatment of *Piazza della Signoria*. For example, in Covent Garden and the area adjoining the Royal Opera House, we recommended both the construction of contemporary buildings, as well as the reconstruction of the demolished 17th-century Inigo Jones quadrant. In this situation the result could meet the primary historical contextual need and also present day functional needs, especially as Jones had designed the arcade as a series of thin façade modules allowing other buildings to be attached. In the conversion of the 19th-century Billingsgate fish market into a trading floor for Citybank we have used the same approach, studiously replacing missing and damaged parts and boldly introducing new pieces.

The Modern Movement

At its genesis, the modern movement was a celebration of social, political and technological progress. It was not whimsical, sceptical, contradictory or timid. It was infused with the spirit of innovation, rose vigorously with coherence and, as ever, was greatly opposed. Intellectually and visually demanding, it was uncomfortably unlike architecture which copies the past.

Revolutionaries, political or aesthetic, come under attack for being different; to survive they deny the history of the immediate past by underlining its contradictions. They build a new ideology out of which myths are created, leaving the ideology open to critical attack. Modernism is to blame for having encouraged simplistic myths rather than serious self-criticism. Critical evaluation of success and failure, which would have shown the urgent need for further ideological development, especially in the face of social, political and technical changes, has not been carried out. If an ideology is to keep its validity after its initial primary goals have been achieved, its assumptions, ideals and contradictions must be continuously re-examined.

At the beginning of this century the modern movement developed an outstanding diversity of approach. The present crisis has been brought about primarily by modernism's inability both to adapt itself to changing needs and more specifically to learn from its mistakes. In particular, architects have tended to explore and develop only one of the many strands of modernism: the 'international' style. This has sapped the original vigorous strength of modernity, replacing it with exactly what it had opposed; a thoughtless, skin-deep styling. These developments have led to today's criticism of the role of the avant-garde by historicist and faddish designers of façades. On the positive side, the necessary questioning of some of the principles of modernity could have the potential to broaden the position of modern architecture. In fact, I believe and hope that in the long run modern architecture will learn from and absorb these schisms and thereby be rejuvenated.

'The present crisis has been brought about by modernism's inability both to adapt to changing needs and to learn from its mistakes'

The postwar faceless functional international style is rooted in the oversimplification of the complex beginning of the modern movement. This tendency can be traced to Hitchcock and Johnson's 1932 exhibition 'The International Style', held at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, which excluded all architects who were not engaged with finite, reductive, white or glass cubes. The 19th-century steel pioneers, constructivism, expressionism, futurism, naturalism, plasticism were all suppressed. Today many architects are researching beyond the reductivist school, exploring these alternative approaches, such as Ludwig Leo, Gustav Peichel, Frei Otto, Coop Himmelblau, Peter Cook, Frank Gehry, Santiago Calatrava, Renzo Piano, Norman Foster, and Jean Nouvel; we would wish to be numbered among them.

Designing For Change

We see our work as a continuation of the modern movement, trying to expand its approach to meet constantly changing needs. We are searching for a more open and dynamic, yet harmonious order which offers the user freedom from the constraints of finite form: geometry which may be modified by new experiences allowing for planned and unplanned evolution but in which the totality has complete integrity at any one time.

We aim to create a building framework where the programme, ideology and form can play an integrated and legible part. The more successful the building in achieving this aim, the more it will need revision, for if in a technological society change is a constant, then a finite solution must constrain. This programmatic indeterminacy is an expression of the building resolved by the correct architectural balance between permanence and change, improvisation with a coherent totality. Some more permanent order is needed both to meet urban contextual priorities and to give visual coherence to the building itself.

Lessons may be drawn from other art forms which incorporate a theory of improvisation and transformation by which parts may be changed without losing the message of the whole, such as certain forms of jazz, abstract art, and nature, forms which have the capacity of consciously organising past experience against future contingency.

The buildings are organised in a hierarchy of legible parts from fixed to changeable: the long-life general-purpose spaces (with a life of 30-300 years) are separate from the short-life technically-dependent servant activities (with a life of 1-30 years).

This approach offers the potential of creating richly-layered and articulated buildings full of light and shadow which, with their changing rhythms,

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Jane Smith

A DAY TO CELEBRATE?

"On International Women's Day we will be asking women to write to the authorities all over the world asking them to release women imprisoned or taken away because of their beliefs.

Governments will be receiving letters on behalf of Teo Soh Lung in Singapore, Safia Mador in Somalia, Luz Rojas in Columba and Veliswa Mhlawuli in South Africa."

Amnesty International

"International Women's day means to me a celebration of all that is lovely about women. It also marks our growing knowledge that we have enormous potential power to act together to make the world a fairer place."

Clare Short
(MP Birmingham Ladywood)

"For those of us who've been beavering away in the British Women's Movement for twenty years, every day has to be "women's day". But International Women's Day is a salutory reminder that we are not the worst off in the world; nor are we alone."

Susanne Lawrence
(Editorial Director, *Personnel Publications*)

"Sadly, International Women's Day means very little to me and to the majority of women and I rather suspect it will be a damp squib. It sounds very important and should be something the whole world knows about, but because it gets so little publicity and there is a lack of co-ordinated effort and commitment, it's something that totally passes by most people. Which is a shame, because it rather de-values the idea of having an International Women's Day."

Linda Kelsey
(Editor of *Cosmopolitan*)

"International Women's Day gives an opportunity to put women *first*, acknowledging all the patient, unrewarded toil which women have undertaken ever since the division of labour began, when women inherited the largest share of work and the smallest share of respect."

Kate Pretty
(Senior Tutor, New Hall, Cambridge)

"On International Women's Day we will be calling on women throughout the world to demand the release of detainees in South Africa. Over 3,000 women have been detained since June 1986 and arrests are continuing."

ANC (Women's Section)

"International Women's Day means a great deal to me, but we have to make it more "mainstream". Only one in a thousand women know about it, and it was only listed in one of five diaries I looked at.

This year I shall be performing in an all-woman production, inspired by and about Nineteenth Century women explorers who upped from constrained and restricted lives to wade through places like the Orinoco and Amazon basins. There is much to be learnt from the fearlessness, disobedience and imagination of those women. The performance on March 8th will be dedicated to those women, and to women everywhere on International Women's Day."

Juliet Stevenson
(Actress)

"The fact that trade unions have now adopted March 8 as well will give us a lot more strength."

Barbara Rogers
(Editor of *Everywoman*)

"A day for women worldwide to celebrate our strengths and achievements, our sameness and our differences. A time to remember sisters everywhere who are deprived of basic human rights, liberty and the means to a dignified existence."

National Council for Civil Liberties
(Women's Rights Unit)

"International Women's Day is an opportunity to celebrate our sisterhood and build our confidence as valuable citizens of the world; a chance to reflect on our individual progress, highlight our efforts and share our hopes for the future. We *need* this mutual encouragement and inspiration.

I love playing "women's" concerts and would like to see an annual musical event of female recording artists on this day, for we have much to celebrate. Never has there been such a powerful upsurge of original independent creativity from female singers and writers – we have taken over the charts!"

Sandie Shaw
(Singer/songwriter)

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can respond to different contextual needs while offering clues to future users as to how the building may be best changed. This dichotomy between the complete and the open nature of the building is a determinant of the aesthetics of the building, especially as normally the life of a building is longer-lasting than the institution it is designed to house. If the result is successful, the life of the building will be extended as the user will be less restrained by an unchangeable form.

Process And Image

The bland, oversimplified buildings of the international school of modern architecture lack the normal visual coding that give legibility, and therefore interest, to the viewer. These buildings should not be mistaken for the modern beautifully-proportional and constructed masterpieces which they purport to emulate, such as the magnificent office buildings in New York: Seagram, Lever Bros, Pepsi Cola, and Ford Foundation, which perfectly reflect the modern commercial patron of our times.

Architecture glorifies shelter and as such it must communicate. The decision of what is visually expressed and the hierarchical order given to that expression is the message which is architecture. These complex and varied forms must be expressed by related building elements which are rigorously composed to produce a clear hierarchy of identifiable, legible spaces and volumes. Even the inside and outside of a building, though expressed in the same idiom, should be capable of responding to different public and private needs, the needs both of the viewer and the user.

As well as functional use and urban responses, buildings are given legibility through the expression of the process of building which in turn gives grain, scale, and ultimately harmony to the whole. Without the craftsperson's understanding and control of the process of building there is no architecture, only ideas, with the architect becoming, at best, a designer of decorated packages, external wrappings of buildings and cities.

I believe in the rich potential of a modern industrial society – aesthetically one can do what one likes with technology, for it is a tool and not an end in itself, but we ignore it at our peril.

Buildings And Space

Planning needs vision and large-scale co-ordination. Until government becomes seriously involved in giving direction, rampant profiteering and petty political rivalry will rule and ruin our cities. Beautiful cities have always been the result of enlightened patronage by those in power, working with creative talents of the day. The great parks, the great streets, the great squares, public places, will not suddenly appear – even less today with the complex technological needs of modern society.

In our project 'London as it could be', a study shown at the Royal Academy in 1986, we illustrated an approach based on limited change of the existing area to create a new heart of the city. The project based on this slight shift could have been realised with government interest and involvement. Left to diverse parties with totally different political and economic motivations: Westminster, Lambeth, the London Residuary Body, British Rail, the Water Board, the Port of London Authority and numerous commercial interests, it inevitably floundered. Without vision and leadership, only piecemeal development is possible and this will never solve the problem of a city fit for modern people.

The primary function of the city as a meeting place for people is being eroded by a wide variety of developments such as the invasion of the vehicle; the introduction of private activities into the public realm; the separation rather than the overlapping of working, living, playing and shopping; the positioning of buildings standing singly in space – more often than not a 'piazza' filled with cars; and the growth of cheap, dumb, commercial buildings standing in the public realm.

The architect's vocabulary should include both the design of buildings standing singly and proudly in space in the classic manner, as well as buildings which create a compact matrix which encloses space. We need an architecture that strengthens and enriches the grain of the city fabric by filling in empty spaces so that streets and squares become dynamic rooms without a roof.

Projects such as the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, Stag Place, Lloyd's, Marseille Alcazar, the *Financial Times*' Bracken House building near St Paul's, and most particularly the Paternoster area adjoining St Paul's, are based on the principle of a continuous solid matrix of building enclosing spaces.

Greater variation in height has led to new views of buildings. Buildings respond to the view of the passer-by, and the roof therefore, must be treated as a fifth elevation. The tendency not to recognise the role of mechanical services has led to the destruction of our roofs by a jungle of uncontrolled plumbing.

Postmodernism

In all fields of endeavour, not least in architecture, it is generally accepted that to learn from the past is the way forward and that history is a prime generator. But to imitate historical form without recognition of the content is to degrade its very importance. A number of prominent modernists – now repentant – have tried their hand at historical revivalism. The results to date have been rarely successful and frequently ridiculous.

'The failure of modernity is not that of architecture but of ethics. Our scientific and financial potential has outstripped our ethical and social resources'

One cannot advance by creating a whimsical collage of disposable symbols such as palm trees, eggs, birds, decomposed Graeco-Roman orders or forms taken from Chippendale furniture. All are divorced from their original political, social and technical background and appear to have no relation to humanity's struggle to give order and harmony to an ever-reducing planet at the end of the 20th century. Though defended by its protagonists as being simple to understand and therefore popular, this language is even more abstruse and exclusive than the language it is designed to replace.

I welcome the opening-up of the arguments surrounding modernity, as I believe they will lead to a greater pluralism of approach: there are many ways of producing good architecture.

However, postmodernism has tended towards a caustic and superficial form of cartoon culture, whether referring to Adolf Loos' Chicago Tribune Tower designed as a Doric column or, some 50 years later, Graves' use of Egyptian motifs. High in image-content of a shallow formal symbolism, devoid of social aspirations and low in cost, this architecture is attractive to the fashion-conscious commercialism of the day.

Critical Value

Does architecture stand as the failure of our times? I do not believe that history supports this view. Modern architecture cannot be separated from the general and revolutionary achievement in the arts and science. I believe that modernism has produced both great ideals and great architecture. However, it is true that good modern architecture has affected only a small section of society because of the corrupting and ignoble forces of commercialism, the scramble for a quick profit and the ruthless pursuit of power which has led to a general crisis of values. The international modernist style perfectly reflects the victory of money and short-term aims over the long-term needs of a civilised society.

In the past decade modern architecture has been exposed to a barrage of criticism, principally from scholars and journalists of the new Right, who always claim to speak for the man in the street. Indeed, it has now become an axiom, unquestioned by either its detractors or its defenders, that modernism is loathed by the public.

My experience, arising from our own work, has been very different. Over five times as many people enter the Pompidou Centre as had been predicted: 70m visitors in 10 years, more than the combined total that visited the Eiffel Tower and the Louvre. The National Gallery competition in 1982 drew immense public interest and our project, though uncompromisingly modern, gained the highest number of public votes (both for and against!). Just as many people go to see the

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interior of Lloyd's (up to 2,000 per day), as visit many of our national museums. What then of the public's antipathy towards modern architecture?

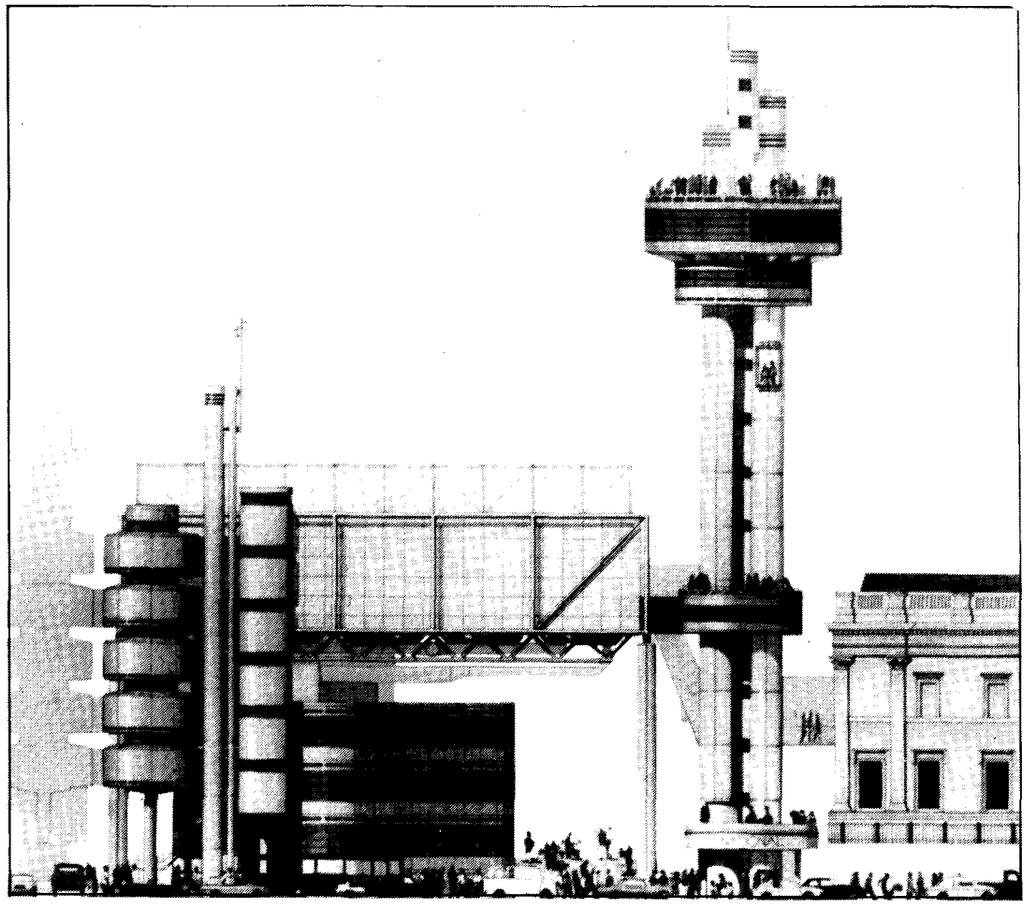
If popular approval was the only relevant indicator of a building's quality then it seems to me the work of our practice would have been clearly vindicated. However, architects are also artists and thus must follow their own creative light irrespective of current fashions. Although public involvement must be encouraged, the decision between being influenced by popular demands and taking an independent stand is not an easy one. The conflict is a familiar one whether to pander to the public or be isolated from it: the extreme between Van Gogh, who sold only one painting in his lifetime, and Annigoni, the painter favoured by our royal family.

Innovation

All departure from tradition has been met with ferocious controversy. When the first caveman left the shelter of his solid, waterproof, easily-defensible home for the lightweight, mobile hi-tech hut – where one couldn't even draw on the walls! – leaving tradition behind him, he and his family were no doubt stoned for being revolutionaries with no feeling for social and visual tradition. Innovation presents all of us with considerable difficulties of analysis and assessment. When confronted with something new we tend to fall back on the known and the proven. But if we are to advance through innovation it is largely a matter of abandoning prejudices about what we imagine the new is like and understanding and accepting its real nature.

Innovation is challenging and therefore often uncomfortable. It raises thoughts and feelings which have not been previously experienced. In order to make an impression and overcome our natural conservatism, innovators tend to overstate ideas and to exclude the more complex and sophisticated elements needed for successful revolutionary change and development. Neither their followers nor their critics appreciate the reasons for these overstatements; the followers take them as gospel and the counter-revolutionaries see them as dogmatic, inhuman dictates; both fail to probe conscientiously into the reasoning behind the ideas.

Today, we are living through a period of enormous scientific and technical advance; perhaps a second industrial revolution. The computer, microchip, transputer, bio-technology or solid-state chemistry should give us more time to work out our complex social and political problems. This could lead to an enhanced natural and built environment, including more rather than less individual control and fewer uniform spaces. For example, buildings will be directly affected physically and visually by the work of scientists and artists, in such areas as dynamically-adaptable polyvalent walls, solar-cell energy systems, photochromism, low-emissivity coated glass, electro-reflective surfaces and the full development of dynamic-smart buildings.



Rogers' 'uncompromisingly modern' proposal for the National Gallery extension

Global Harmony

Up to 30 years ago human action did not affect the basic stability of the planet. We could rightly believe that our tribe or nation's ideas were worth dying for as this only affected a small part of the globe and those who lived on it. Since the advent of nuclear warfare this position is untenable.

The implications of ever-faster communication, the birth of space travel, international industrialisation and trading are extending humanity's responsibility for order and harmony, beyond the traditional limits of the family, to the global habitat, a habitat whose well-being is dependent on the flourishing of every human being. If this objective were taught at every school and reiterated at every opportunity by all those who are in a position of responsibility, we would be better able to control our destiny.

The present generation is responsible for passing on the legacy of a polluted planet, of countless millions without the most basic requirements for a humane existence, of massive arms expenditure and build-up. In architecture, great ideals have been demeaned by commercial greed, with the result that the common denominator is now a more or less decorated shed standing in an unplanned and inhumane environment.

'If we are to advance through innovation it is a matter of abandoning prejudices about what we imagine the new is like'

This is in stark contrast to our ability to develop, co-ordinate and utilise the modern, complex advanced technology when it is applied to war, space and national aggrandisement. For example, today we have successfully organised the raising and the spending of $200 per head of the world's population on arms, to support our global policy of confrontation. If our aims were different, this would be more than sufficient to meet the basic needs of health, food, shelter and work.

The failure of modernity is not that of architecture but of ethics. The crisis we now face is that our scientific and financial potential has outstripped our ethical and social resources. To live in harmony, our tremendous advances in science must be matched by an ethically and culturally-equivalent development. The scramble for profit and power must not be allowed to erode our civilisation and destroy our beautiful planet. Humankind has created art, philosophy and science. They are the most beautiful, most enlightened and most enduring achievements.

With the advent of modern science we have the option of having all humanity living at a higher standard than anyone has ever known. To achieve this, we must question traditional beliefs, we must stop being defensive of our property, our market, our nations and our point of view. Civility implies living in harmony with the past, the present and the future. ●

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New Times

The Party Is Over

The old political party is in decline. The world has moved on and it has had its day. A different kind of party is now needed, argues **Sarah Benton**, a party that is more flexible and less romanticised

The political party as we have known it is an anachronism. Out of all the tasks it is set there are only two it can carry out with any adequacy: it can contest elections and it can produce a caste of professional politicians to take part in the ritual of public affairs. People have expected so much more. But the party can rarely enforce democracy in government or civil life; where 'the private' advances, so the party's control of the state recedes. It does not usually emancipate its individual members; it is not a means through which people can exercise more choice in their lives or more control over their lives. It is not an 'authentic' voice of the people: the most common view of party politicians is that they lie. Far from standing for democracy, for most people, the politicial party represents ritual tedium for the masses who at worst fear they are subjected to the professional exclusivity, fanaticism and manipulation of the few. It is not surprising that political parties of the old sort are in decline all over Europe and North America. Only those that have changed their ways face the future with anticipation.

The 'old parties' are those that were established by the 1920s. They differed from each other in ideology and social composition but they were all a response to two phenomena: the advent of the mass vote and the emergence of the all-powerful nation state. Each of these – the state and the mass vote – shaped the development of the other through the medium of the party. The pacemakers were the mass parties with a formal ideology of socialism – including the fascists of Italy and the Nazis of Germany, both of which began with, at least, a rhetoric of power to the masses via the state, as of course did the communist parties.

Unlike the upper class, with its access to many forms of power through the army (Prussia in particular), church (Italy), land (most of Eastern Europe), and business (Britain, Germany, USA) both the professional middle class and the then huge working class had access to power only through the state. Unlike the upper class, their only access to the state was through the party. The development of systems of mass production, especially in the USA, Germany and Britain, also shaped the mass vote and produced the potent imagery of the working class as a single, dynamic whole.

Even those who were dismayed by the dawn of the party age, noted the exciting power of mass politics. 'All is hurry and agitation; night is used for travel, day for business, even "holiday trips" have become a strain on the nervous system. Important political, industrial and financial crises carry excitement into far wider circles of people than they used to do; political life is engaged in quite generally; political, religious and social struggles, party-politics, electioneering, and the enormous spread of trade-unionism inflame tempers, place an ever greater strain on the mind, and encroach upon the hours for recreation, sleep and rest.' (This is Freud in 1893, quoting a contemporary in *'Civilised' Sexual Morality*.)

The catastrophic failure of capitalism after the first world war ensured that the mass parties represented the best claim to manage the future. With the dereliction of mass unemployment, only a greatly enlarged role for the state could produce balance, stability and social equity. To socialists of all sorts this was so obvious it was just common sense. Where social democrats diverged from communists and fascists was in their pursuit of a state that would be invulnerable to demagogues and the mob.

It was their parties that took the lead in shaping modern politics. In the name of delivering power to the people, socialist parties from the 1930s and particularly after the second world war treated politics as a profession and reforming society as a matter of good management. The crunch came in the 1950s; those governments which had ceded fewest political rights in civil society, for workers or consumers for instance, found themselves the most stultified. They produced a form of government which cannot regenerate its own political drive, whether it was the Soviet Union's 'era of stagnation' or Britain's Labour Party. Labour's first postwar government survived just six years, defeated less by a newly triumphant conservatism than by its own internal exhaustion. In this inability to regenerate itself, postwar British socialism has been different from most West European countries. It has had fewer roots in essentially heterogeneous communities which in turn have had less political autonomy from the state. It is no accident that the British Left, especially the Labour Party, has responded by a bitter turning inwards.

While the Left pursued professionalism, the Right, especially in Britain, still offered up amateurs (as indeed the *form* of British political government is still a sham anachronism of monarchy in collaboration with amateurs. Its members of parliament in both Commons and Lords are notionally and, in the case of many Tories, actually, part-time.) Through much of Europe after the war, the Right resisted socialism's claims in the name of small 'c' conservatism, a long-drawn out nostalgia for the images of empire and supposed social harmony of the pre-party era. It was the inability of conservatism in the 1960s to face the modern world, as much as Labour's claims that it *was* the modern world, which brought in Wilson's government – and obviated the need for a radical

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rethink about the party.

For Wilson had brilliantly mastered the images of an anachronistic, anti-democratic conservatism in contrast with 'scientific', productive socialism. His denunciation of the Tories for choosing a peer, Lord Home, as its leader in 1963, said it all: instead of the democratic party, he jeered, the Tories had used an 'aristocratic cabal'. Thus: 'After half a century of democratic advance, of social revolution, of rising expectations, the whole process has ground to a halt with a fourteenth earl'. How can this 'scion of an effete establishment', he demanded, 'lead the scientific revolution and mobilisation of the skill and talents of all our people in the struggle to restore Britain's position in the world?' If that accurately represented the Tories' deferral of tomorrow's world, it also disguised how the deferral allowed Labour to speak for a winning alliance without any serious rethinking. Only the emergence in the 1970s of a new Right which claimed to represent the future, scuttled Conservative nostalgia, replacing it with a contempt for the immediate past and a curious silence about the heyday of the mass party. It was as though their party had no history.

Today's Right is quite right to recognise that an era was ending in the 1960s. Before 1950, it was still possible to conceive of the political party as the 'modern prince', modern because the collective agency of party had superseded the mediaeval individual leader; but a prince nonetheless, an heroic entity. This romantic conception of party endured until the 1960s; it nestled even in the most prosaic bosom of British Labour. For instance, Francis Williams, a true Labour loyalist, friend of Clem Attlee and former editor of the *Daily Herald*, describes the birth of the Labour Party *(Fifty Years March, The Rise Of The Labour Party)* in this way: 'And now, on that February morning in 1900, the curtain was rising on a new act in this tremendous drama...' And: 'The Party born on that grey February day in a drab commercial street off Fleet Street was to... mobilise behind it and become the chief instrument of a polticial uprising of the working classes of Britain that was to change the social and economic face of the country out of all recognition...' This hero would go on to carry through 'a programme which would have seemed the wildest and most revolutionary utopianism to those passing along Farringdon Street about their ordinary business on that February day in the first year of the new century.'

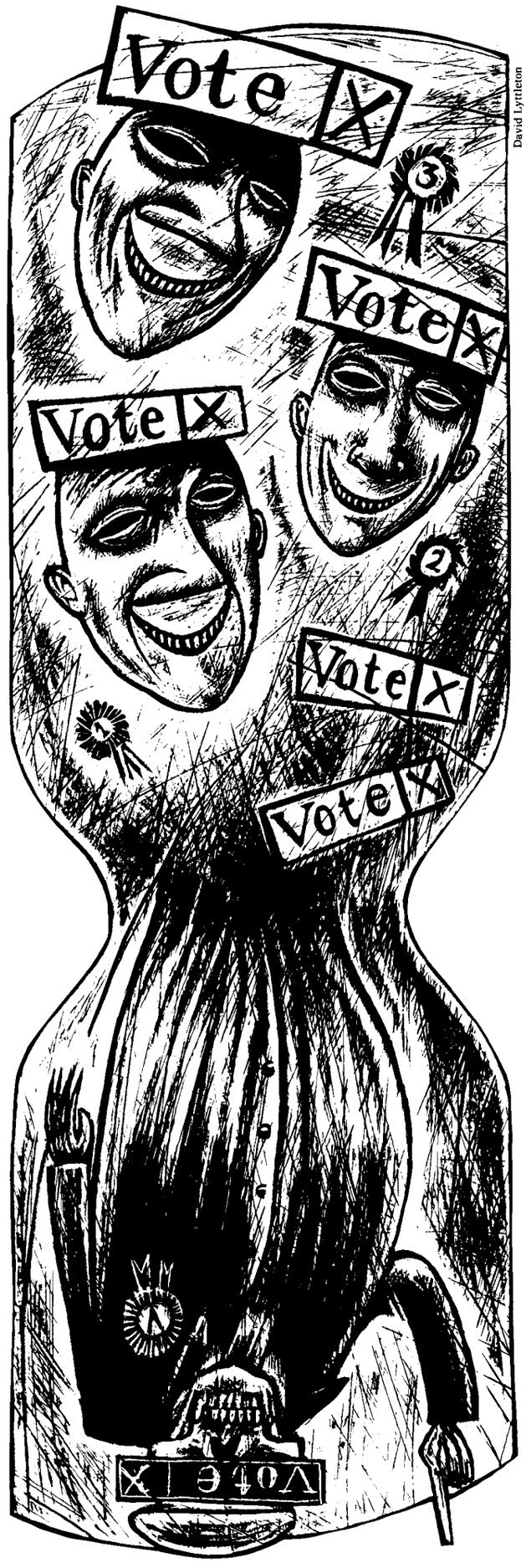
Romantic? Undoubtedly. Francis Williams was writing in 1950. A dip into any account of politics between 1890 and 1920 will come up with even more stirring stuff. Thus (and quite randomly), a Mr Pickles urging political unity at the Co-operative Movement in 1917: 'I am attending meetings one night as a socialist, another as a trade unionist, and another as a member of a co-operative board, but I am working for democracy in sections... Let us put all our cards on the table, stand together, and go forward for democracy – (applause) – triumphant democracy.' His rallying cry was for party unity, but he spoke too for the unity of the masses who made the party. The hero of modernist imagery in the 1920s and 1930s was, if not the mass itself, an anonymous worker, individual in statuesque form but not in character.

Like a prince of old, the party demanded loyalty, inspired love and devotion, promised delivery from evil, fought battles on behalf of the needy, brought nobility into the grey, drab lives of the many. Because it was a collective, it also exacted discipline and demanded sacrifice. It woud not have been heroic had it not. (The forms and imagery of the military were never very far away either). And if the party was a heroic warrior, so too were the people. The party was the people, they and it were a single whole.

Nobody today regards the party in this way. Lingering romantics see it as having been 'corrupted' by power or betrayed by weak, susceptible men while the working class retains its character as a martyred unity. For others, the loss of illusion is just part of the modern condition. The loss of faith is in the party, in the state, in politics itself – and in the masses. To read today the futurists quoted by Marshall Berman (*All That Is Solid*): 'We will sing of great crowds excited by work, by pleasure and by riot; we will sing of the multicolored, polyphonic tides of revolution in the modern capitals', is to know we live in a different era.

Today we do not believe that the mass can be made into a single, heroic whole by a political party. As Marshall Berman notes, a distinctive feature of today's modernity is the sense of fragmentation, accompanied by a genralised loss of meaning. The 'new times' argued Stuart Hall in *Marxism Today* (October 1988), are characterised thus: 'greater fragmentation and pluralism, the weakening of older collective solidarities and block identities and the emergence of new identities associated with greater work flexibility, the maximisation of individual choices through personal consumption.' Not only is the whole fragmented, so is the 'self' too. The Co-op's Mr Pickles in 1917, perhaps felt the same; unlike us with our kaleidoscopic selves, he felt all could be made whole by the party. He felt his individual, sensate self should be lost in the party surge to democracy.

Our conceptions of party have not been brought into line with this new reality of multiple selves who can no longer be marshalled into one mass party with a single aim: to win control of an all-embracing state. The attempts by party leaders to reshape their parties as both professional elites and



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Lesbians and Gays face an ever increasing rise in violent attacks on them. The background to this violence is political - the effect of Section 28 as an official sanction on such crimes and of the bigoted and biased treatment of the AIDS issue by elements in the press. Right wing nationalist groups have specifically targetted lesbians and gay men and black people for attack.

OLGA is responding by mounting a new campaign - work has been initiated on support systems, a security leaflet is in the final stages of preparation and a survey is being prepared to arm us with statistics to fight back. We urgently need funding for this campaign. Volunteers are required to help on the survey and in distributing the leaflet.

OLGA - fighting for Lesbian and Gay Rights

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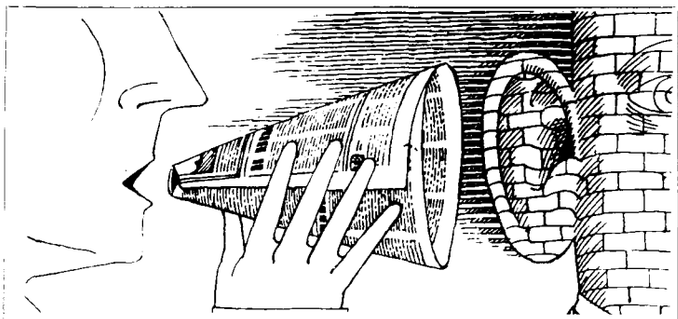

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SOVIET WEEKLY

Black Alive
One Day Conference
18th March 1989

Black Politics Today – Featuring Paul Robeson jnr from the United States. Wide ranging discussions on policing, immigration laws, culture and religion, Southern Africa, the Labour Movement and much more. Special screening of Mapantsula – new feature film shot in Soweto, currently showing in the West End – followed by international evening featuring Bolivar – Latin Salsa band – plus the latest sounds from West Africa.

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WEEKEND

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Discuss the arguments with the authors in 16 separate workshops

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purveyors of popular political culture are jagged with these contradictions. In January, the Labour Party launched a campaign to double its membership. Neil Kinnock insisted that they faced no political obstacles, only administrative blocks. Yet the Tribune group pamphlet, *A Mass Party*, homes in on the need to create a new political culture in the party and society at large. Paddy Ashdown, leader of the SLD, measures his party's claim to replace Labour in membership figures. Yet his new party, under pressure to produce this first professional elite able to move with the media times, is disconsolate as the hold-true Liberals turn their back on professionalism to haunt the old/new community politics.

Only the Conservatives appear to have no qualms. Peter Brooke, Conservative Party chairman, launched their recruitment campaign in June 1988; but they were quite clear about their aims; more members meant more money and the next generation of a professional elite. Their political culture of garden parties for the women and clubs for businessmen is quite sufficient for their needs.

Among the rest, the crisis of purpose runs deep. What are all these members for? If party members are the cadres of a political mission, what exactly is that mission? For the old form of party is an anachronism not only because it's the wrong shape, not only because we no longer come in just two or three classes, but because so much power has been shifted out of the state machinery which the party was shaped to control.

The desultory connections of people, party, parliament and state are common to many countries. They are testament to the disappearance of power; like the Scarlet Pimpernel, political power no longer has a fixed, visible locus. It is not found firmly in the British state and certainly not in the British parliament; it is not tucked in the pockets of M15 pursuing its paranoid fantasies through our keyholes nor is it filed in the cabinets of Luxembourg or Brussels. It is not floating in a silicon valley or sitting snugly in the IMF, the Group of 7, the headquarters of Coca Cola, among Italian freemasons circling the Vatican or in the safe of a mighty arms manufacturer.

It's in all those places and none, here there and nowhere. There is no single citadel to be captured, no commanding height which, once scaled, gives a political party power over the civic universe. As the fragments of power whirl frustratingly in and out of vision, conspiracy theories multiply. Many of them are correct; there are indeed conspiracies hatched and carried out by private companies, shady networks of military and commerical interests, the state's secret underworld. Some do considerable damage; all are anti-democratic. Never dismiss a good conspiracy when one is hauled into the daylight. But do not either attribute to it a *Boys' Own* capacity to rule the world through its secretly acquired powers. The world's not like that.

If political power cannot be delivered by simple control over the nation state, then the form and function of parties, designed to win such control, have to change if they are to survive.

It is for this reason, as much as the changing sociology of class relations, that the Conservatives have been the dominant power this decade. Their rhetoric of rolling back the frontiers of the state is an acknowledgement of the limits of the nation state in today's conjunction of economic and political power. This is not because the Thatcherites were immensely more percipient than the socialists; rather it was because Conservatives have never been so dependent on state powers to get what they want. They have thus had a freedom of manoeuvre in a changing world which parties of the Left have not enjoyed. The fact that much which constitutes 'Thatcherism' has been, like earlier Conservative eras, an ad hoc response to circumstances is clear. In *Popular Capitalism*, John Redwood, a tipped-for-the-top MP who worked in Thatcher's policy unit as well as Rothschild's privatisation unit, describes how accidentally they arrived at privatisation. The strategy that became the driving force of Thatcherism was not planned but stumbled upon.

Parties in other countries have followed suit, though much less wholeheartedly. The crisis for British left parties has been far more acute both because the economic problems which the nation state is expected to solve have been more grave for much longer; and also because of the peculiar role of trade unions in Britain. In no other country have unions, party and state been tied together so intractably in what became a deadening mission to create a bureaucratic corporate state.

At the time it seemed to be a juggernaut that could not be diverted. Hence what seems like the overkill of Thatcherism in severing those links. For Labour, the consequences have been near-fatal. Because that alliance was dominated by a peculiarly British labourist/corporate view of political power, the Labour establishment was also less flexible, less responsive to both external circumstances and to nudges for change that came from below. For it should not be forgotten that criticisms of Labour's dependence on a bureaucratic state and undemocratic union leaderships came first from the Left.

Given the recent history of the Labour Party, it seems absurd to suggest it has not changed its form, or that it has failed to look self-critically at how it works. The political crisis of the 1970s, which split virtually every party on the Left, produced the most protracted drive to change Labour's structure in the party's history. Its successes came from a drive for democracy and against domination by the old labourist officials; its weaknesses from the conversion of demands for democracy into a punitive war against betrayal conducted in an increasingly suffocating political vacuum.

The results are well-known. Led for the most part by the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy, with most of the left-wing groups, the party introduced the right of constituency parties to re-select their MPs and, in a manoeuvre to keep its by now fractious parts together, an electoral college for the party leader and deputy. The focus on internal change continued through the 1980s. For the first half of the decade it was dominated by two demands which were tactically linked, though had little connection in principle. The first was for leaders' accountability, the second for representation of modern communities.

The attempt to make the parliamentary party accountable to the party in conference and in constituencies certainly made MPs more responsive to their constituents. The favoured relationship of right-wing MPs was of occasional visits accompanied by various 'favours' delivered to the region in the form of extra state spending. The reforms have created the 'constituency MP' who holds at least a fortnightly surgery and spends much of his or her time dealing with individual constituents' problems. The down side of this is that a party of good constituency MPs is not easily able to become a political leader, its collective mind focused on issues of national strategy. New individual heroes emerge – like Robin Cook or John Smith; but the Parliamentary Labour Party does not provide a collective political leadership. Thus the reforms have not delivered two crucial goals: the creation of an intellectual, political leadership, and roots in the many communities which comprise society.

'Our conception of party has not been brought into line with this new reality of multiple selves'

The immediate consequence of the drive to reform ironically made that harder. It provoked the breakaway of the SDP. That seemed to prove the rightness of the Left's belief that the party was harbouring traitors who would, if let off the leash, sell the party down the river. The response of the leadership (to Peter Tatchell for instance) made the Left define itself as victim of a witch-hunt. The tradition of distrust of all leaders surged to the top to dominate Labour's political culture. But this bitterness came also from the barely-articulated recognition that political power was escaping from the party. Only by tightening the screws might some hold be kept on it.

The second demand, for representation by the new political identities of race and sex, acknowledged the shift of social and political power; class was no longer the single embodiment of oppressors and oppressed. Just as the power of the state lost its central locus,

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so power in society had fractured. The one-time unity of the working class had been a unity imposed by the dominance of the skilled, white male worker. His authority at work, in the union, at home was under threat from all sides.

The demand was also an attempt to force into the party the means for its self-regeneration. That is, the new, informal constituencies of women and blacks could bring fresh life when the old bureaucracies of union and party officials could not. But the desperation to secure political representation divorced from any political programmes on race or sex, was a mark of the wholly formal, empty quality of the politics.

And it is here that we see the fateful inadaptability of party forms to modern life. The activist, preoccupied with council affairs or party committees, became increasingly remote from life outside the party. And the further away real power seemed from the Labour Party, the more ferocious became the demands that its symbolic form be redistributed round the members. As the state receded as a focus for political demands, and party establishment expanded to fill the space.

In the 1980s, the party also became a magnet for the movements which had developed out of the 60s and 70s. This is a comment on the limits of movements, a pointer to what parties alone can deliver.

Unlike the party, harnessed to the needs of the state, the movement was truly 'modern'. It rejected class as a determinant of individual political choice. It sought to eliminate the gap between personal feeling and public action. The liberation of the political actors was as important as, if not more important than, the conquest of opponents. The movement rejected institutions for itself, as these would tend to freeze political positions and embed conflicts to win control. It upheld direct action both as a form of self-expression and as more effective than formal political procedures. The movement was oriented towards action, but changing culture and attitudes were goals as legitimate as law reform. Its modernism lay in its rejection of the idea that there is a single oppressed people or a single source of authority to be undermined or of power to be captured.

Most of these ideas were common to the black movement, the women's movement, the gay movement and later the green and peace movements and, to a limited extent, those disabled by injury, illness or addiction. They have in common the fact that their potential membership is circumscribed, and their goals are not universal. In this, they differ from parties.

Nationalist movements, now so powerful as the agency against Communist Party *ancien regimes*, as well as the British party *ancien regime*, differ again. Though they share the emphasis on culture and speak the language of liberation and radical change, they have powerful roots in old traditions of masculinity, land and family honour all of which bind together dominant racial communities. They look backwards to an old brotherhood as well as forward to a new democracy. Apart from the greens, only nationalist movements have produced national parties and, unlike the greens, they alone claim to speak for the whole people, rather than acting as an avant-garde to advance a minority view.

Green parties in all countries have attempted to be 'parties of a new type' and to a considerable extent they have succeeded. Their structures are much looser and, in particular, they acknowledge the 'person' in politics. From its inception as a po-faced very English Ecology Party in the 1970s, the British Green Party has borrowed most from movements and from abroad; its conference now falls over itself to help members feel themselves, so to speak. Like movements, green parties expect individual members to embody political principles in their personal life.

These trends are a direct result of the movement ethos, which sought to dissolve the barrier between public and private principles. There is the same stress on authenticity; only that which comes direct from the self, the author, has validity. The SDP, in its early days when feminism was a strong influence, demonstrated its modernity by establishing 'networks' to encourage women's participation. But, in opposition to the Liberals especially, it also raged against 'old-fashioned' sloppiness. New practices were designed as much to create a professional elite as to dissolve the gulf between professional and amateur in politics. The requirements of power and the exigencies of size both count against new forms. The larger and more established the West German Greens have become, the harder it has been for them to maintain their ethos of an open democracy.

We should not be romantic about movements. While Geoff Mulgan in *MT* (Dec 1988) is right to commend the openness and resilience of movement networks, he slides over the actual political weakness of 'weak' structures, in particular their inability to change the state. Many of those we still refer to as the 'new movements', as representing the spirit of a new age, have lost their elan and cohesion. Their values survive and networks have proved resilient. But the mood is of consolidation and solace, rather than advance.

There have been successes. All the 'new' movements achieved lasting changes in awareness. They have been truly liberating. They have changed the lives of the direct participants and of those around them. They have given a political voice to those who would otherwise be silent. They have all challenged the conventions of politics. Movements have been the main agents in exposing the anachronistic structures of party politics.

Parties are not, of course, going to wither away. How then can the party be changed so that it is a positive agent for freedom and democracy? How can parties both aim to win state power and act independently of the state, as voices of the people?

We must first accept a limited role for government and the state. The most we can ask of a state is that it lays down the essential standards of free and fair treatment on which civilised life depends. In actuality, that is a lot more than the nation state or transnational institutions do at the moment.

If the potential of the state as an initiator of progress is less, then there has to be a corresponding increase in the self-activity of our multiple selves in civil society. We all have to imagine how things ought to be run in ways that keep open democratic channels without requiring compulsory attendance at weekly meetings. How can the NHS be made responsive to its clients? The bus service? British Rail? How can a local community get its streets cleaned when and how it wants? How do we balance the rights of street-cleaners with the rights of street-users?

This is the issue of political leadership, and for Labour, it means a different relationship with the parliamentary party. Instead of seeing it as the apex of the pyramid, it should be just one wing of the party. Forms of political power outside parliament need more energy devoted to them. This will be increasingly true if the party is serious about decentralisation.

As we have learned from movements, people will begin to form political groups as a need arises. The party should not seek to take these over, as communists have done, institutionalise them – or ignore them, as was Labour's way. Rather it must be able to bring together temporary alliances of interest groups which may well feel themselves to be in conflict. This will mean co-operation with other parties on specific issues and values.

Too often, parties of the Left are perceived as dogmatic and exclusive, rewarding only those they agree with. The party must be the principal defender of democratic channels for everyone. Through this, it can be the defender of civil society against the authoritarianism of the state.

In short, the old relationship of homogeneous state and class, which created the mass political party of reform, no longer exists. But the very fragmentation of society creates a need for clear political leadership; the alternative is a drift towards popular and governmental authoritarianism to stave off 'things falling apart.' The creation of a political form that can provide that leadership, as well as the promotion of civil political activity, independent of the state, are the two overriding needs. ●

'The Conservatives have had a freedom of manoeuvre in a changing world which parties of the Left have not enjoyed'

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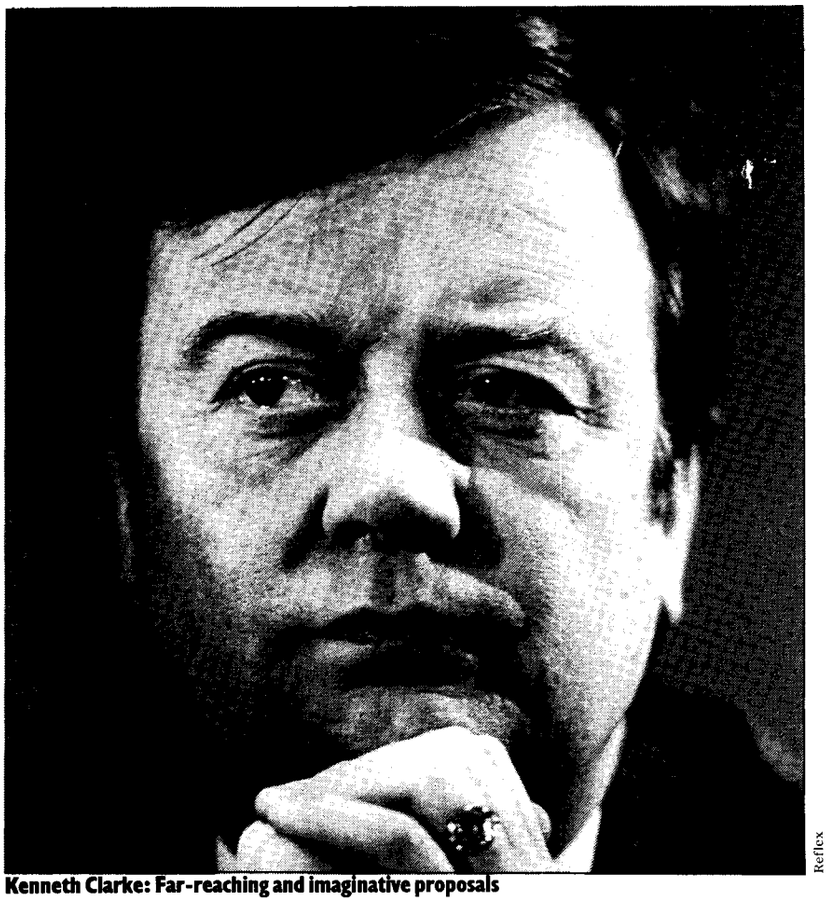
Clarke's Strong Medicine

The government's long-awaited NHS review has finally seen the light of day. **Chris Ham** tries to sort out the wheat from the chaff



Reflex

Kenneth Clarke: Far-reaching and imaginative proposals

The NHS occupies a special place in the Left's thinking about the welfare state. Born of the postwar settlement, it demonstrates what can be achieved when socialist ideas are translated into practice. As a consequence, any proposals for reform are likely to be met with suspicion, especially when they emanate from this government.

It was therefore no surprise to hear Robin Cook and other Labour Party spokespeople claim that the white paper on the NHS, *Working For Patients*, marks the beginning of a policy of privatisation. In fact, there is little in the white paper to justify this claim. The prime minister may wish to see higher levels of private finance and provision in health care, but this is unlikely to result from the programme set out in the white paper.

Instead, the programme seeks to preserve the basic principles on which the NHS was founded and to tackle its weaknesses through a series of incremental and imaginative reforms. These reforms centre on the introduction of incentives to doctors and hospitals to provide services that are more responsive to patients. In tandem, competition between providers will be used to stimulate greater efficiency in the use of resources.

Although the white paper supports the further development of the mixed economy of health, public finance will supply the major portion of health service funding for the foreseeable future. But within the NHS, the *funding* of services by health authorities will be separated from their *provision*. In future, health authorities will act mainly as purchasing agents on behalf of their communities, buying services from a range of public, private and voluntary providers.

The white paper envisages that the separation of funding and provision will create the conditions for *managed competition*. In other words, health authorities will seek the best deal for their residents by buying services from competing providers. This process will be carefully managed to ensure that appropriate services are available in each locality.

What are we to make of the white paper? There is little doubt that the proposals will be a disappointment to those on the Right who have argued for a major reform of NHS funding and provision. It will continue to be funded largely out of taxation and there are no plans to extend user charges. Tax relief on private insurance premiums is to be made available to those aged over 60, but the significance of this is more symbolic than real. For the majority of the population, access to health services will be based on need and not ability to pay.

To those on the Left, a discriminating response is appropriate. Outright rejection of the white paper woud be both wrong and a missed opportunity. The NHS clearly has a number of weaknesses that need to be tackled, including a lack of responsiveness to patients, the wasteful use of resources and the lack

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of accountability of doctors. Where the government's proposals offer the prospect of addressing these problems, they should be welcomed.

Equally, where there is a danger that vulnerable groups will lose out and standards of care will widen, the proposals should be challenged. At this stage, the main concerns are threefold: the quality of care may suffer in the quest for efficiency, local accountability will be diminished, and there may be insufficient safeguards to ensure that the stimulus of competition does not erode the core values of the NHS. Whether these concerns are realised depends in part on the details of the government's strategy, to be published in eight working papers. Also, the precise implications of the white paper will not be clear until the ideas are tested in practice.

Working for Patients is, then, a high-risk strategy, not least because it seeks to extend the enterprise culture into the one service that has largely escaped the Thatcher revolution and which continues to enjoy high-level public support. The danger with this approach is that it may widen inequalities in health and the use of health services, and undermine the principles on which the NHS is based. On the other hand, it may bring about modernisation of aspects of the NHS and enable some of the real problems that exist to be addressed. Whether it does so depends on the fate of two major innovations: GP budgets and self-governing hospitals.

GP practice budgets will be available to practices with at least 11,000 patients. These practices will be able to apply for their own budgets to cover both the services provided by GPs themselves and a defined range of hospital services. The hospital services included within the scheme are diagnostic tests, such as X-rays and laboratory tests, outpatient services, and non-emergency in-patient and day case treatments.

One of the main aims of practice budgets is to create a stronger incentive for GPs to use resources efficiently. The government hopes this will be achieved by GPs having to consider more carefully whether to refer a patient to hospital and to prescribe drugs. If GPs underspend their budgets then the savings may be used to improve practices and to extend the range of services on offer. Equally, if budgets are overspent, the money is recouped from the practice in the following year. Persistent overspending will result in an audit and possibly the practice losing the right to hold its budget.

The potential merits of practice budgets are clear. GPs will be forced to think more rigorously about what form of treatment is best for their patients: they will have an incentive to provide services directly instead of using more expensive hospital services; and by basing budgets mainly on the number of patients served, the government hopes that GPs will respond more positively to the demands of their patients.

To this end, the government intends to make it easier for patients to change GPs, and to make an informed choice of their doctors. GP practices are to be encouraged to provide information about their services and the government wants advertising of the services offered by practices to become the norm. These proposals are designed to stimulate competition and to give patients more influence over the kinds of services they receive.

Set against this, practice budgets face some obvious pitfalls. The first and most serious is that they may encourage GPs to be more careful in accepting patients. Much will depend on the detailed formula that is introduced for paying GPs. The white paper indicates that practice budgets will be based principally on the number of patients served, weighted to reflect age, health and other characteristics. The precise weightings will need to be finely tuned if GPs are not to favour younger, healthier patients at the expense of those who are older, sicker and more expensive to treat.

A second danger is that GPs will respond to budgetary constraints by undertreating patients or by providing inferior treatment. The government argues that the safeguard against this is the freedom of patients to change GPs if they feel dissatisfied. In practice this freedom will be easier to exercise in some parts of the country than in others. And even where a genuine choice of group practice exists, patients may find it difficult to judge the quality of the service on offer.

Medical audit, in which doctors regularly review the quality of their work, is to be introduced as a routine part of general practice and this should help to raise professional standards. But medical audit is essentially a form of professional self-regulation and, unless the results are made public, patients will not be in a position to exercise the informed choice to which the white paper aspires.

A third concern about practice budgets is whether GPs have the interest and ability to take up the challenge that is being thrown down. The scheme is to be voluntary and initially will be limited to large practices which are presumably considered more likely to have the managerial expertise required to run a budget of £600,000 or more. The white paper makes it clear that each practice's budget will include a fee to cover the start-up costs of participating in the scheme. No doubt this will be used as a carrot to encourage volunteers to come forward. In practice, those GPs who are already well organised and provide a good service to their patients are likely to be among the first of those to opt for a budget, leaving smaller practices and single-handed GPs operating as at present. There is a clear danger here that standards of care in general practice will diverge even further. And, consistent with the inverse care law, those patients whose needs are greatest will continue to receive a second-class service. On the other hand, there will be an incentive for smaller practices to amalgamate and in time this could help to raise standards.

'There are doubtless those close to the government who hope for a much bigger role for the private sector and this may be the hidden agenda'

The second major innovation in the white paper is the proposal that some hospitals should become self-governing. In essence this involves larger general hospitals establishing themselves as NHS Hospital Trusts. These hospitals would no longer come under the control of a district health authority but would be free-standing hospitals within the NHS. They would earn their revenue from the services they provide and much of this money would come from contracts negotiated with health authorities. These contracts would specify the range of services to be provided, their cost and quality.

Self-governing hospitals would also make contracts with GP practices holding their own budgets and with private purchasers of care. This form of funding would enable hospitals to overcome the so-called 'efficiency trap' in which treating extra patients increases expenditure but brings in no additional income. Furthermore, as money travels with patients, self-governing hospitals would have a stronger incentive to respond to the demands of patients.

The decision on whether a hospital should become self-governing is likely to depend to a large extent on the attitude of medical staff, although the initiative may come from other sources. Local service users may play some part in the process but their views are not given much attention in the white paper. This is consistent with the new role for health authorities involving less local public participation in the work of authorities and more emphasis on their management responsibilities. Community health councils will continue to represent public opinion to health authorities but there is no escaping the conclusion that greater efficiency is being sought at the expense of local accountability.

A number of questions arise in considering self-governing hospitals. First, if these hospitals are to be funded for the work they do, will they concentrate on profitable services that are in demand by purchasers of care outside their locality at the expense of services that are needed by local people?

Second, if self-governing hospitals attract patients from a wide geographical area, what kinds of patients will benefit most? Will the needs of younger, more mobile, better educated patients be more effectively looked after than the needs of older, less mobile patients who may be unwilling or unable to travel for treatment and be less aware of the possibility of so doing?

And third, will the economics of competition result in the concentration of services at a smaller number of hospitals able to provide these services

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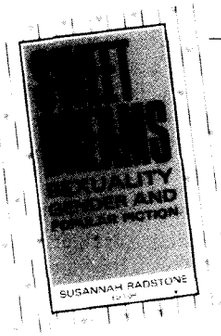

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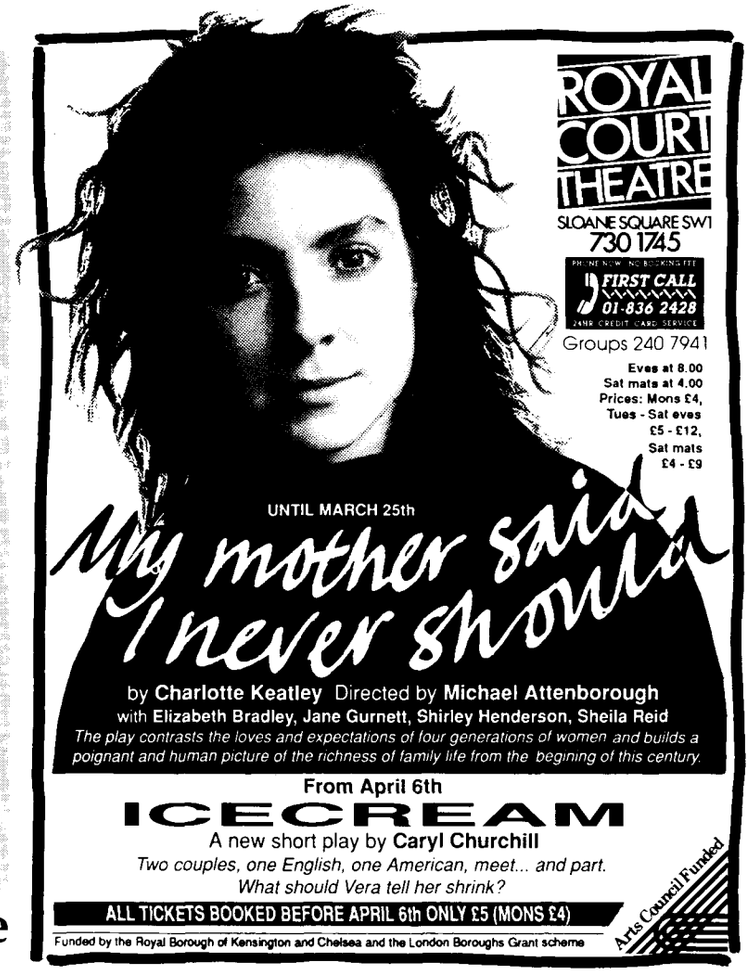
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to a higher standard and lower cost? If so, who will decide whether the trade-off between efficiency and accessibility is worth making?

To raise these questions is to illustrate the potential dangers of introducing market principles into a public service like the NHS. Anticipating possible criticism, the white paper insists that self-governing hospitals must continue to provide services to local people where no alternative exists. But striking the right balance between competition and regulation will not be easy. Constraining the competitive spirit by introducing too many safeguards may be self-defeating. Equally, allowing competition to be unregulated is likely to produce results which are inconsistent with the aim of providing accessible and comprehensive services. Where the balance will be struck is unclear.

A further complication will be how to manage competition within limited budgets. Health authorities and GPs with practice budgets will have to provide services within financial allocations agreed in advance. Service providers will thus be competing for a bigger share of a fixed cake. If self-governing hospitals, or indeed the hospitals that remain under the control of health authorities, attract additional patients and income, this will be at the expense of other hospitals. While it is possible to compete for finance from private purchasers, this has obvious limits. Indeed, private hospitals themselves may in future compete more aggressively for NHS contracts.

The implication is that unsuccessful hospitals will have to reduce their services and in some cases close. Will the government be prepared to sanction these closures, particularly if it means that a community will have no hospital services available locally? If not, will extra money be allocated to the NHS to enable these hospitals to remain open?

The white paper sets out an ingenious manifesto for reform. In contrast to previous NHS reorganisations, carried out uniformly on a single appointed day, the government's proposals are evolutionary yet far-reaching. Instead of mandated change, a complex mix of incentives will be set in train designed to influence behaviour, particularly in the medical profession, in order to achieve the government's stated aims of increasing efficiency, putting patients first and enhancing professional accountability. This method of reform – using incentives rather than structural reorganisation – may hold as many lessons for the Left as the substance of the white paper.

Much of the package will depend on the willingness of the key players to participate. It is a safe bet that the incentives will be structured in a way to move the players in the desired direction. Thus, the freedom given to self-governing hospitals to set pay rates, hire and fire staff, and raise capital on the private market will make this option attractive to many. Equally, the ability of GPs to manage practice budgets flexibly, compared with closer audit of prescribing costs for GPs who do not opt for budgets, will tempt GPs to choose budgets.

'By giving budgets mainly on the number of patients served, the government hopes that GPs will respond more positively to the demands of their patients'

This approach, subtle and sophisticated, makes it more difficult for those who are opposed to the white paper to organise their resistance. And despite the emphasis on a voluntary approach, it is clear that the government is not interested in experimenting with change. The direction has been specified, the negotiation now is about the pace and precise route to be taken.

If the white paper contains risks for patients, it also has dangers for the government. Much will have to be done to win the support and commitment of key producer interests, most notably the doctors. And in time, giving GPs more responsibility for budgets may make the rationing of services more explicit, especially if patients are denied treatment because budgets are exhausted. This in turn could fuel the demand for increased expenditure. The funding crisis which sparked the NHS review, and which the white paper does nothing to address directly, will then reappear. The risks for the government in its chosen strategy are thus considerable. More than one political career rests on its success. ●

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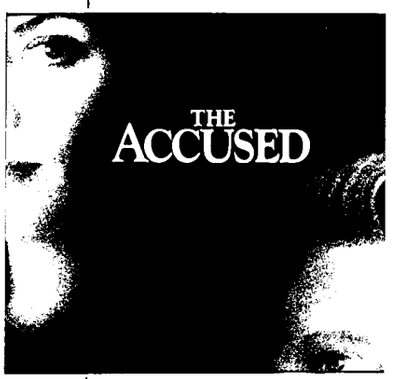
The Accused On Release

After much controversy in the United States, *The Accused* is now opening in British cinemas. Beatrix Campbell suggests that it will turn out to be one of the most important movies of the decade

The waitress and her attorney: No spontaneous solidarities

The Accused is the first popular movie of the 80s to self-consciously take the side of women and invite men to take responsibility for rape. Its commitment to that project is a kind of redemption for the producers, Stanley Jaffe and Sherry Lansing, whose big hit, *Fatal Attraction*, was a real shocker, a serious regression. It seemed to be emblematic not so much of 1980s' postfeminism as anti-feminism. *The Accused*, in contrast, takes its form from mainstream melodrama and its consciousness from modern feminism.

Unlike many movies which occupy the landscape of sexuality, *The Accused* does not face the woman viewer with the dilemma of her own self-destruction as a woman-with-desire, while she watches the drama of desire played out as woman's destruction. What the film offers women is the affirmation of their pain as victims, but more than that, it offers pleasure.



There's pleasure in the metamorphosis of the classic portrayal of women as victims (they're both doomed by men and yet dependent on the protection of men) into women as survivors, and more than that, as protagonists. For once, women aren't defeated. And they defend *themselves*.

Women's pleasure as spectators is multiplied in solidarity with the performers. Jodie Foster and Kelly McGillis, who play the rape victim and the assistant district attorney who prosecutes her case, have expressed not only pride in their performances, but in the politics of the whole project. Foster, the child star who took herself off to Yale University, said that she wanted to play Sarah Tobias, the raunchy, working-class waitress, who is gang-raped, because she was 'close to my heart'. She wanted to enable Sarah 'to find her own voice, to prove to society that she could rise above their low expectations of her'. McGillis wanted to play either Sarah or Kathryn Murphy, the cool, chic, district attorney, because she wanted to 'help give other rape victims a voice'.

There is another level of identification with Foster and McGillis. They're both stars and yet for once that doesn't exempt them from the world of women – the debates in the United States have invoked both women's real-life experience of sexual harassment and rape. When it comes to the reality of sexual terrorism, they're women just like any others. They've suffered, and they're using the power of stardom not to transcend our reality but to intervene in it.

It is a measure of the permanence and yet the precariousness of patriarchy and of women's insistent presence that popular Western culture gives us not only the trashy *Fatal Attraction* but also serious and popular interventions in sexual politics like Farrah Fawcett's chilling melodrama, *The Burning Bed*, about a battered woman who kills her husband; *Nine To Five*, the secretaries' revenge movie; and now *The Accused*.

It is within civil society and the courts, (it's no surprise that *The Accused* becomes a court-room drama), that we see the most dramatic expression nowadays of how the power struggle between men and women is regulated and resolved. It is there that we see sexual politics in the raw rather than within the political domain which remains aloof from the seismic shifts in contemporary sexual culture. It's another example of the isolation of the political domain from politics as she is really lived.

Much of the debate about *The Accused* in the US has focused on Sarah and the rape scene. It is detailed and relentless. The question is: does it titillate? It's an interesting question that, isn't it? The assumption is that to show the abuse of a woman always risks the arousal of men. The film also pushes the audience to the limits of conventional wisdom by making Sarah a sexual outlaw – she drinks, she likes to smoke dope and she flirts with her assailant.

But *The Accused* is meticulous here. Sarah is raped in a bar by a preppie, good-looking student while a posse of men cheer and join in. The camera is positioned so that it neither identifies with the victim nor with her assailants. While she lies,

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prone, on a pin-ball machine, buried under the bodies of the rapists, our eye is guided around the clamouring, cheering men who not only let it happen but make it happen. They're never allowed to be neutral.

There is also a modesty in the camera's gaze. The movie makes no effort to dramatise Sarah's pain and shame. To let us see into her would seem like another invasion. For women spectators, perhaps, we bring to her what we already know. And men? Well, they have to use their imagination. They are confronted by what they, too, know about their own sex, but in this scene they also have to see men as women see them and thus, as men must, too.

Interestingly, Sarah can't *see* them. She is doomed to *feel* them and their effects. We, the spectators, also see the crowd through the eyes of two critical characters, the woman working in the same bar, who averts her gaze and gets on with her job. She wants no trouble, she's got two children to take care of. And then there's the preppie student's admiring buddy, who can't take his eyes off what's going on, and who hates what he sees. It is he who follows Sarah as she flees and it is he who calls the police to report the rape.

This brings us to another feature of the film's politics: there are no spontaneous solidarities. It's not a case of men are beasts and baddies and women are only goodies. The goodies have to get better before they get to be goodies, and it is through the process of consciousness-raising that the film constructs the drama. It is the drama of self-discovery and the difficulty of solidarity which gives the narrative its *frisson*. Because we know from the beginning who has done what.

Here the film offers a fresh variant on what the feminist film critic Judith Williamson has designated the phenomenon of the 'single working woman' in the movies of the 1980s. These two are not professional women severed from communal or sexual context, but working women who are also sexual.

It is class which divides the women: the waitress from her attorney. McGillis as district attorney, is aloof and disinterested. She treats the victim, just as her assailants did, as an object, never consulting her, never confiding in her, never respecting her. The rapist student's wealthy parents employ classy lawyers, and ultimately they do a deal. The law is not about the truth, after all, it is about winners and losers.

Sarah finds her redemption in her revolt. She storms into the attorney's coolly-exquisite apartment – a domestic laboratory – one night while she's entertaining, and plays hell, as only a woman from her class can. It is then that the professional woman finds sexual solidarity with the working woman. Only then does the attorney take responsibility by deciding to prosecute the bystanders. To do that she also has to face out the opposition of her male colleagues in the district attorney's department.

The film confronts all bystanders with their culpability by adopting this ingenious strategy of taking a legal action against some of the bar-room bystanders as accessories. By their inertia they are not innocent or exempt, they are involved. And in their indolence, Murphy's colleagues also forfeit the claim to innocence. They, too, are to blame.

The film dares not only to explore the difficulty of sisterhood, it also illuminates the swamp of male solidarity. The reluctant and scared male witness is tormented by his loyalty to the lads as well as to their victim. And the film lets us see why.

Two words haunt the trial of the bystanders. Sarah is asked what she said when she was being raped. Did she cry for help, her interrogator asks. No, says Sarah, but what she did say, over and over again was 'NO'. Was 'No' not enough? These are key words, they challenge women's historic subordination in film – the heroine's salvation is traditionally supposed to lie in her proper dependence on a solitary hero, who in avengeing her also avenges his own insulted masculinity. Here, Sarah's integrity is restored by her own demand that her word was enough.

The Accused is suggestive of the political problems which challenge us in the late-80s and which are about nothing if not the dissolution of old solidarities and the discovery of new ones. Neither gender nor class alliances are immaculately conceived, made in heaven. Shared class or gender does not bring with it equivalent knowledge or identical interests, and this film's maturity lies in its refusal of sentimental solidarities. Sure, it's got gross, queasy music, and yes, it carries some soppy characteristics of melodrama, but it is also disciplined in its refusal of easy unities.

'It is within civil society that we see sexual politics in the raw, rather than within the political domain which remains aloof from the seismic shifts in contemporary sexual culture'

That discipline is what gives *The Accused* its happy ending. The slut gets her proper status as a person; not as a victim but as a survivor. The snob discovers sisterhood. The scared boy becomes a man by joining women. And patriarchy, for once, gets the blame. ●

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Planetary Influences

As we approach the spring equinox and the beginning of a new astrological cycle, Andy Medhurst, a reliable Capricorn, peers into the heavens and wonders what pleasures the stars hold for us

Louise Montgomery, who writes the horoscopes in the *Daily Mirror*, had some good news for me on February 1: 'It's one of those days when luck will surround you. Something should make it a time to ignore life's more boring demands and have a good time.' Spot on, Louise, for just a couple of hours later *Marxism Today* phoned me to ask if I would write an article about astrology. Given my celestial tip-off, what could I do but throw down the duster, defer the washing up and head for my typewriter?

Astrology is, as you'll have noticed, an easy target for cheap sarcasm. Believing that the arrangements of stars and planets might influence terrestrial lives is usually seen as irrational gullibility. Think of the responses to the news that Nancy Reagan relied on astrological advice, or recall how *Neighbours*' Mrs Mangel gazed into her tealeaves and exposed herself as an old charlatan. And what better way is there to mock a certain kind of American than by assuming a deep voice, sidling up to someone at a party, and purring, 'Hi, I'm Ralph, I'm Gemini'? Yet despite its lack of any concretely provable basis, not to mention its embroilment in those risible Californian lifestyles, astrology continues to boom. It's extremely big business, but what needs does it answer? Is it harmless fun or pernicious delusion?

I have more reason to complain than most. As a Capricorn, I've been systematically victimised all my life. We Capricorns are dependable, dogged, reliable, solid, the trusty mountain goat plodding along. We are massacred with faint praise. One astrology book I read (it was, needless to say, American) assigned countries and parts of the body to the various signs of the zodiac. I got Belgium, knees and shins.

This anti-Capricorn bigotry aside, horoscopes are rarely negative. The style and the language vary from publication to publication, adjusted to suit the different target audiences, but no column I've read doles out despondency and gloom. Take these three forecasts for Aquarius, all from the same week. *Woman's Own* gushed, in the rotundly-camp shape of Russell Grant: 'As one life cycle comes to an end, so another more brilliant, radiant and sparkling is about to begin. Make the most of it.' *The Tatler*, loquaciously upmarket, cooed: 'The harmonious effects of Venus make this a good time for rebalancing partnerships that may have endured small difficulties last month. The other very enjoyable aspect of Venus is a heightened appreciation of yourself.' *Mizz*, aimed at teenage girls, was commendably blunt: 'Romance chance – wear black, look dramatic and head for your fave Friday Night Place. He'll wear green, look gorgeous, and head straight for you.'

These horoscopes function as a kind of reassurance therapy, stating an optimistic version of the obvious. I doubt, for example, whether readers of *The Tatler* need very much encouragement to devote their lives to self-admiration. Pop astrology (as it is dismissively called by the more serious practitioners of the predictive arts) appeals because of its delight in categorisation. How simple life would be if there were only 12 basic types of people. The horoscopes let us enjoy that fantasy for a while. It's all a bit of a giggle, like those pseudo-psychological surveys which also occur so frequently in the popular press. The same issue of *Mizz* that tipped the wink to love-hungry Aquarians also included a guide to men's personality traits based on their choice of underpants. Wearers of boxer shorts are 'strong, faithful and down-to-earth', while those who favour Y-fronts 'haven't a clue what sex is all about'. Substitute zodiac signs for undergarments and you'd have perfect pop astrology.

There is a more serious side to this. Interest in astrology is part of the 80s' boom in all things alternative. The revival of Westerners' involvement in Eastern religions, the growth of homeopathic medicine, the continuing popularity of interpersonal therapies, feminist appropriations of mystical symbolism – all these share a deep and understandable dissatisfaction with the claims of hard science to explain the world. If masculine rationality has brought us acid rain and nuclear missiles, then perhaps ways of thinking hitherto stigmatised as 'irrational' may deserve re-examination. Astrology has its place in this, but what marks it out as different is that it also has a long-standing place within popular culture. You'll find fortune-telling booths in every seaside resort, but there aren't many Sri Chinmoy temples or Gestalt workshops along the Golden Mile.

This is why horoscopes continue to flourish. Of course they can't offer any hope of accuracy, they don't deal in trines, alignments and rising signs, but that isn't their point. On its pop level astrology has few pretensions, it offers nothing more or less than the pleasures of daydreaming. Reading Louise Montgomery gives us a moment or two to wish things were otherwise. She and her colleagues form part of the soft-hearted utopianism that is a central strand to so much of popular culture. The tabloid horoscopes allow us the indulgence of if-only-ism. After all, who *wouldn't* like to meet a tall, dark, handsome stranger? ●

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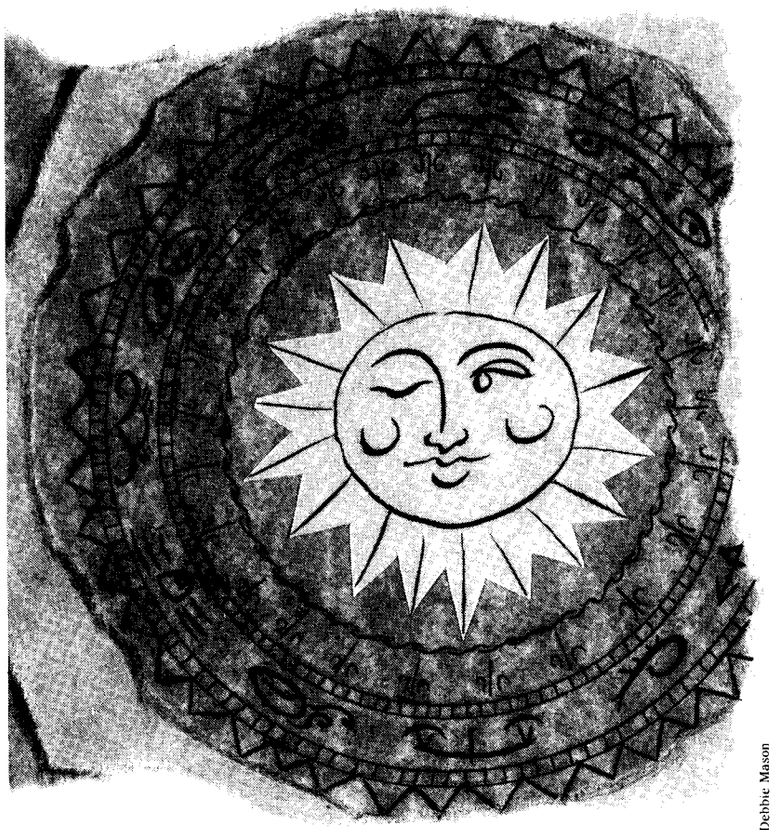


Debbie Mason

Aries:
Hasty, forceful, active, impulsive.
Marlon Brando, Adolf Hitler, Maya Angelou, Neil Kinnock.

Taurus:
Materialistic, tasteful, possessive, stick-in-the-mud.
Marx, Lenin, Elizabeth II.

Gemini:
Talkative, analytical, intellectual, spontaneous.
Boy George, John Wayne, Mary Whitehouse.

Cancer:
Protective, determined, intense, emotional.
Nancy Reagan, Esther Rantzen, Ernest Hemingway, David Owen.

Leo:
Kind, loveable, fun-loving, self-centred.
Barbara Cartland, Alfred Hitchcock, Jacqueline Onassis.

Virgo:
Systematic, repetitive, thorough, practical, patient.
Agatha Christie, Michael Jackson, Sean Connery.

Libra:
Approachable, relaxed, indecisive, artistic.
Margaret Thatcher, Oscar Wilde, Edwina Currie.

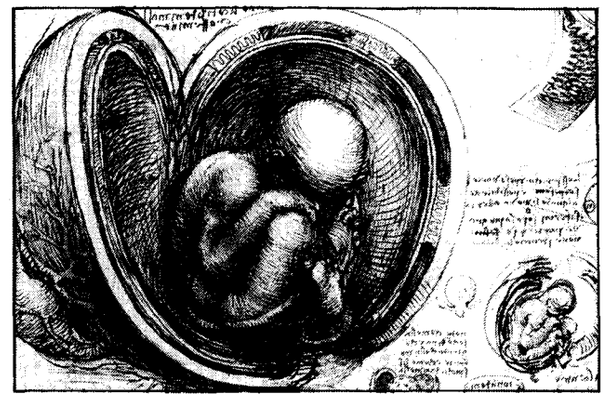
Scorpio:
Passionate, complex, devious.
Pablo Picasso, Richard Burton, Grace Kelly.

Sagittarius:
Optimistic, loyal, adventurous, restless.
Woody Allen, Bette Midler, Winston Churchill.

Capricorn:
Traditional, committed, unadventurous, successful.
Marlene Dietrich, Arthur Scargill, Josef Stalin.

Aquarius:
Independent, curious, cool.
Ronald Reagan, James Dean, Vanessa Redgrave.

Pisces:
Imaginative, sensitive, creative, vague, spiritual.
Mikhail Gorbachev, Elizabeth Taylor, Albert Einstein. ●



The Foetus In The Womb (c. 1510-12)

Apocalypse Then: If Leonardo Da Vinci was alive today he wouldn't get an Arts Council grant, or a show of his drawings at the Hayward Gallery (to April 16). He was not the sort of artist we have today, even if this drawing, ***A Cloudburst Of Material Possessions***, conveys a strangely modern sensibility and subject matter. For Leonardo the technical skill of painting objectively was something to be respected; careful observation and scientific knowledge were to help him achieve this. He would play at God, understanding nature and exploiting his insights to give us a clever simulation on canvas; images like the foetus above conveyed with optical truth and neutrality.

He is not so hard on himself when it comes to drawing and, as this exhibition shows, an expressive, irrational element begins to appear towards the end of his life. This can be seen in a small series of apocalyptic drawings of deluges, with ominous overtones of violence and destruction, the forces of nature erupting like spiritual wrath. No wonder, when a thunderstorm must have seemed like a psychic outburst of the earth itself to a man who thought that fluids on the land (rivers) did the same job as fluids in a person (blood).

The exhibition also has models built from Leonardo's designs for tanks, guns and flying machines. It is hard to know how important all those famous machines really were to Leonardo himself. He invented a lot, and seemed to enjoy it, but you get the feeling that the hope of financing his art was what really pushed him on. I can imagine him between patrons, broke and frustrated, scribbling out wild ideas in the hope of attracting a sponsor and a fortune. Maybe his feelings are expressed in this drawing from near the end of his life. The engineer's tool-kit comes crashing down in a violent storm. In his own caption, Leonardo laments: 'O human misery – how many things must you serve for money.' ●

Michael Wenyon

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Margaret Atwood: Moving into a more tentative and ambiguous mode

Tales Of The Unexpected

There has been an explosion of new women's writing. New forms, genres and moods. Nicci Gerrard explores some of the latest fiction and wonders what has happened to the old-style feminist novel

Feminism is dead according to an article in an American magazine that I read the other day. They – who are 'they' anyway? – say we are in a post-feminist era; a time when collective advances are abandoned for individual assertion; a time of weariness with anger and worthiness. And we – who are 'we' anyway? – know all too often what 'they' mean. Being a feminist in the late-80s can be a bit dispiriting.

It is hardly surprising that much contemporary feminist literature reflects and comments upon this shift from outrage to ambivalence, or from batty optimism to slumped resignation. After all, feminist writers have often interrogated feminism itself. The feminist fiction of the 60s, 70s and 80s is full of anxious self-questioning, which can be thought-provoking and revealing or can eventually become tedious, narrowing the world to an individual's narcissistic self-analysis. Feminist confessionals have had their day. There was a time when it was exhilarating and liberating to read about the daily and familiar desires and despairs of women. Such fiction placed female concerns at the centre of the tale and gave them grave or witty attention, and it showed readers that the personal and the public cannot be disentangled. But not many people care anymore about whether you shave your legs.

Today the equivalent debate is not so much 'how good a feminist are you?' but 'what has happened to the feminist you once were and the feminism you once espoused?'. The very question can herald a new way of writing as well as a shift in perspective; it implies disavowal, re-wording, disenchantment, change.

Margaret Atwood has written several funny and angry books about clever, witty women and the escapes they make from tyrannical, but rather dim and feeble men. In *The Edible Woman*, *Surfacing*, *Life Before Man* and *Lady Oracle*, panic and horror and humour are found in everyday domestic experiences. Then came her bleak dystopia, *The Handmaid's Tale*, a nightmare vision of the world we could be heading towards.

The Handmaid's Tale seemed to move Margaret Atwood from her previous tales of bizarre realism to a brilliant kind of prophetic futurism. In her latest novel, *Cat's Eye*, however, she turns back to contemporary society and individual lives, and in so doing questions what feminism has become.

The heroine of *Cat's Eye*, Elaine Risley, is a middle-aged and successful feminist painter who has grown uneasy with the assertions she used to make, the tag that she bears, and the images of female ferocity that she finds in her art. It is difficult not to identify the painter with Atwood herself, or Elaine's questions about her art with Atwood's about her writing.

Elaine's reflections about her uneasy relationships with other women demonstrate the painter's feelings of guilt as well as defiance: 'At parties they start to ask leading questions that have the ring of inquisition; they are interested in my positions, my dogmas. I am guilty about having so few of these; I know I am unorthodox, hopelessly heterosexual, a mother, quisling and secret wimp... I still shave my legs.'

While cursing their demands: 'I am not Woman, and I'll be damned if I'll be shoved into it', she also admits to envying 'their conviction, their optimism, their carelessness, their fearlessness about men, their camaraderies.'

Margaret Atwood looks back on feminism's heady and irrecoverable beginnings with a mixture of admiration, nostalgia and patronage. In doing so she finds a new tone for her writing. Where she was previously brilliant, fast-paced, witty, inventive, she now shifts into a more tentative, investigative and ambiguous mood. And other feminist writers have also moved towards reassessment – Doris Lessing's *The Good Terrorist*, for example, questions old loyalties and reworks beliefs. Marge Piercy's massive tome about world war two, *Gone To Soldiers*, lacks the fire and rage of her earlier novels. Marilyn French's *Her Mother's Daughter* possesses the hectoring old missionary zeal but is lugubrious about the possibility of feminism transforming the world. Yesterday's dramatic certainties are today's ghosts.

There is now a different, and more exciting, kind of feminist fiction emerging, which turns away from the angst-ridden feminist confessional and plunders other traditions – futurism, magic realism, crime and science fiction, post-modernism – to piece together idiosyncratic, outward-looking and adventurous novels. Such novels leave the small canvas of everyday individual life for a more epic sweep. The world, rather than Hampstead Heath, becomes the stage.

Jeanette Winterson serves as a good example of future possibilities. In her mid-20s she wrote her first novel, the funny and moving *Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit*, which is an autobiographical account of a girl growing up in an Evangelical household. She then wrote the not-so-funny but still humorously-engaging *Boating For Beginners*. Then, after an aborted attempt to follow her two comic successes with a third in the same vein, she produced *The Passion*. *The Passion* leaves the small town of today behind; it is set during the Napoleonic Wars and explores the nature of passion

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and risk, and the fate of sensitive young men in militaristic times. It is full of bizarre events, surreal images, half-formed philosophies. The flaws of *The Passion* are ones of welcome excess; it is ambitious, magical, epic, over-weaning and thoroughly captivating.

Of course, many novels have been liberated rather than simply defined by their feminism. But there is the sense now of such liberation being more widespread and emphatic than it was a decade ago. Young(ish) and new(ish) writers are bringing out books that are full of daring rather than of anxiety. So Leslie Dick's first novel, *Without Falling*, is an irreverent post-modernist examination of female masochism. It is about passion and the language of passion; about the impossibility of a coherent identity or romantic fulfilment in a post-modern world. It inherits the worn-out feminist question, 'how much have I suffered?' and turns it into a far less complacent, uncomfortable one, 'why do I take pleasure in my own suffering?'

Kathy Acker's novels are upsetting post-modernist examinations of warped desires; the American, Gloria Naylor, describes an exuberant utopia, inverting and reinventing black history; Sara Maitland writes a feminist book of spells; Maggie Gee's *Grace* is about love and redemption in a nuclear age. Feminists are writing science fiction, crime novels, ghost stories, satires, Ealing comedies, horror stories; they are writing futurist fiction, magic realism, history. They are inventing their own forms.

Marianne Wiggins' *John Dollar* and Helen Hodgman's *Broken Words* are fascinating examples of such diversity. *John Dollar* is a female version of *The Lord Of The Flies* – a horror story in which it is little girls, rather than boys, who are tipped out on to a deserted island off Burma and whose behaviour disintegrates into unimaginable excesses. At the end of the novel they eat a man, in a final act of female worship and revenge. *John Dollar* is a sinister and rivetting novel. It is a compulsive example of the female horror story.

Unlike *John Dollar*, Helen Hodgman's *Broken Words* starts from the particular (south London in the 80s) and the mundane. Daily and rather depressing ordinariness – unemployment, squalid housing, trivial quarrels – is infused with a surreal black humour. While being a lesbian novel, it takes a swipe at the traditions of feminist fiction, constantly pulling the carpet out from under its own feet.

Helen Hodgman is affectionate but rueful about her crowd of ageing and wavering feminists. A dog called Angst, wandering around on Clapham Common, takes on the burdens of old-style feminist fears – and gets stolen. Hodgman evokes an age of postfeminism, sick fantasies, sexual violations and broken words. Out of the imaginative hiatus she has written an imaginative if slightly mad novel.

Both *John Dollar* and *Broken Words* show how women writers can move away from their inheritance. They are not gentle, not domesticated, not (what a relief) worthy or brave. They are ambitious, wide in scope, experimental in style. *John Dollar* is not about feminism at all; *Broken Words* is gleefully on feminism's lunatic and self-mocking fringe.

The feminism of today is less heady, certain and unified than it was a decade ago. It is no longer possible to talk confidently about its aims and values. But such diversity is its strength as well as its weakness. Its elasticity and pluralism ensure that feminism will not harden into an old and familiar shape but that it will continually change, challenging the forms that it once took. This is nowhere more evident than in feminist fiction. The variety of genres, styles and subjects, the willingness of authors to plunder old traditions for new ways of writing is both confusing and exhilarating.

If feminism *is* dead, well, long live feminisms. ●

The End Of The Affair

In the following passage, taken from Helen Hodgman's *Broken Words* (Virago, £11.95), Moss is talking to Buster, who once had filled her with lust but now inspires pity. Both are lesbians, staunch feminists and fellow-workers on the Women's Design Collective. Sometimes sisterhood between all the women becomes a bit precarious

'I'm sorry the Collective had to break up,' Buster was saying now. 'I'm not. We none of us has the energy for it any more.'

'I did,' said Buster, which was true. 'I sort of feel –' She blew small trails in the soft hair of the baby's head, 'feel you all decided things behind my back.'

Yes, they had. Not intentionally. Buster just hadn't been around when it happened, that's all. Moss could understand how she felt, but she didn't want to talk about it. Once, discussion would have been imperative but now Moss just felt wrecked, exhausted by what felt like a thousand years of talking with other women, of listening, sharing and struggling to define their common experience. It had been exciting, necessary, valuable, but now she wanted to hand over the baton and let others – younger, stronger women – continue the race. Moss knew this defeatist line would cut no ice with Buster, though the sporting metaphor might appeal. Moss tried to think of something to say that would prevent further discussion. She saw an article Hazel had torn from the *Guardian* and stabbed on the wall with the paring knife. Yes. That would do nicely.

'Besides,' says Moss, her voice falling and softening in an effort to strike sweet reason, the tone of one persuading a dog to give up its bone, 'wouldn't you honestly say, Buster, that we've all moved on a bit from the early days of the Collective? That indeed, darling, we may have reached a plateau beyond all that. Entered a sort of – uh, a sort of – um, post-feminist phase?'

Buster's eyes blurred behind a film of pain. 'You don't mean that. You can't.' . . .

I do mean it. And I'm not alone in my opinion, you know. It's a reasonable analysis.' Moss turned her guilty gaze to the bit of the *Guardian* curling on the wall.

Buster's face closed; she packed it away and stood up to do the same with the baby. Buster was leaving; going to Berlin perhaps where, it was said, interesting things still happened. But first Moss must ask Buster if her baby's a boy or a girl. Buster's not forthcoming. 'The baby's perfect,' was all she said. Moss saw Buster and the perfect baby to the gate. 'Ciao bella,' said Moss for old times' sake. 'Adios,' said Buster firmly.

Moss watched her trudge up the street to the bus-stop. She thought her brave. Buster stopped when she reached the corner and looked back at

Hodgman: Wide in scope

Moss. The baby's head poked from its pack, bobbed from side to side like a balloon. Traffic fumes blurred the line of trees growing at the edge of the Common across the busy road behind them. The whole scene felt wavery, uncertain, as did Moss's stomach as she raised her hand to wave goodbye.

'Good luck,' she cried, though by now Buster was far too far away to hear her. Moss noticed a strand of mauve wool caught on the gate post. As far as Moss could see, it ran all the way up the street. Buster had been wearing a mauve jumper. Was Buster unravelling? . . . Life was full of loose ends. ●

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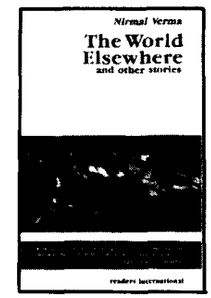

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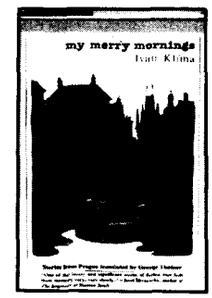

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Abseilers Do It On TV

If homosexuality can be promoted, reflects Pratibha Parmar, viewing figures for the Channel 4 series *Out On Tuesday* will surely grow larger by the week

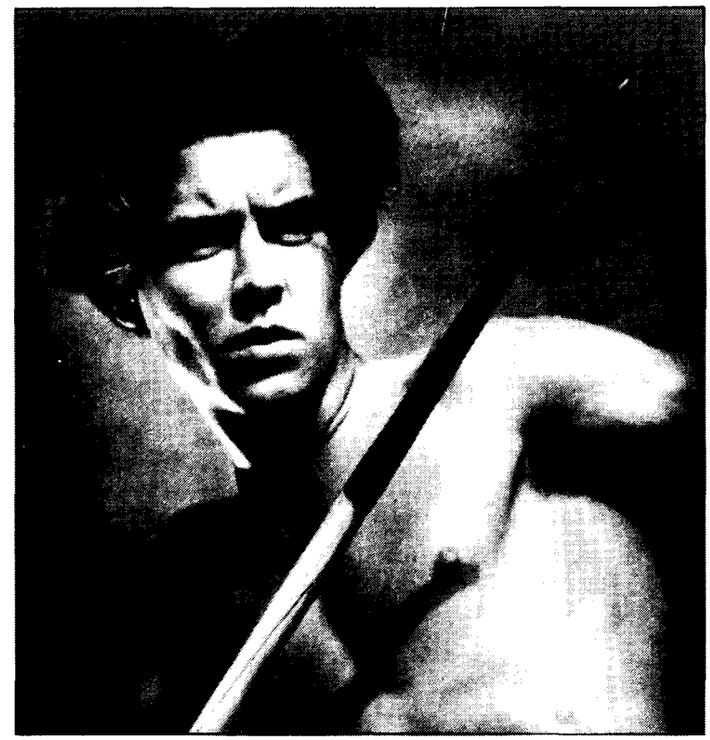
Imagine turning on your television and finding a 30-second advert promoting homosexuality. This is exactly what many viewers saw when they tuned in to the first programme of the new Channel 4 series *Out On Tuesday*. Persuading Saatchi and Saatchi, the agency most famous for promoting Thatcherism, to devise an advert to promote homosexuality was something of a coup for the series. Watching the earnest, male copywriters fumbling to articulate the positive aspects of lesbian sexuality made for some interesting viewing.

Section 28 was an attempt to suppress the growing visibility of lesbian and gay culture and to stop the so-called promotion of homosexuality. But, ironically, one of its more permanent effects has been to increase the self-confidence of, and give a higher profile to, Britain's lesbian and gay community. This series was commissioned long before Section 28 appeared on the political agenda. Caroline Spry, the commissioning editor from Channel 4 explains: 'Since the days before Channel 4, there have been calls for a regular slot dealing with lesbian and gay concerns. Two or three years ago our department decided to take up the idea of a coherent and newly-commissioned series.' The production company, 'Abseil', has devised a magazine format combining current affairs and cultural features. The company name refers, of course, to the lesbians who abseiled into the House of Lords, in protest against Section 28.

Out On Tuesday distances itself from series such as *Gay Life*, which was made by London Weekend in the late-70s. That series has been described as an attempt to explain to, convince, or educate heterosexual audiences about lesbian and gay 'issues'. The programmes often tried explicitly to challenge anti-gay prejudice. This new series deliberately targets a lesbian and gay audience. Mandy Merck, the series editor, is quite clear about this: 'We have gone for a much more straightforward address to gay and lesbian people. Straight people are quite likely to tune in to the programme. Paradoxically, the more we address people like ourselves, the *more* they are likely to tune in. People are most curious about the things that they think are *not* addressed to them! That's fine by us but we never apologise and we never explain.'

Many of the programmes reflect this concern to capture the imagination of the lesbian and gay communities. 'Fag Hag And Drag: The Role of Women In The Gay Male Bar', for example, faces up to significant divisions among lesbians and gays. This and items such as 'The Dyke Detective' and 'Lesbian Sex' were selected after extensive interviews and research. Fears that the series might not cover more hard-edged political issues are allayed by items like *After Stonewall* which marks the 20th anniversary of the origin of the modern gay movement and examines how gays can best pursue their political interests today.

While the magazine format reflects a variety of lesbian and gay concerns, the marginalisation of the cultural and racial diversity within these communities remains. Unfortunately, an exploration of the divisions that exist within these communities, particularly around racism and the subjective experiences of black lesbians and gays, are absent from the series. The excitement and vitality around the growth of the black lesbian and gay movement in the last decade is largely invisible. A notable exception is the film *Looking For Langston* by the black film-maker Isaac Julien.



***Out On Tuesday:* Targeting a lesbian and gay audience**

Looking For Langston is a beautifully filmed, imaginative 'poetic meditation' on the poet Langston Hughes, which weaves erotic images with a haunting text. It is a milestone because it makes black gay men visible on their own terms as well as using historical memory to explore the absence of black, gay sexuality within the American artistic movement known as the Harlem Renaissance. *Looking For Langston* and Stuart Marshall's *Desire*, a moving and powerful history about gay concentration camp survivors, were originally commissioned by Channel 4's Caroline Spry and they are significant contributions to the series. Their inclusion confirms the Channel's commitment to small, independent film companies and individuals.

But what does the future hold after the deregulation of existing broadcasting organisations and the proliferation of satellite and cable tv? Caroline Spry is cautious about the implications of these radical developments: 'It is difficult to see how small independent companies won't be affected by the changes.' Of companies working in controversial areas or catering for minority audiences, she says that 'their future is clearly uncertain in a broadcasting system that will probably have to take fewer risks'. This is borne out by signs that ITV is already gearing up to shed its statutory obligations to religious and minority programming in a bid for the highest advertising revenue.

And where, indeed, is the advertising revenue going to come from for future lesbian and gay programmes? Maybe Saatchi and Saatchi will have been so successful in their promotion of homosexuality that ever larger audiences will emerge. Optimistic maybe, but apparently not impossible as far as the supporters of Section 28 are concerned. Meanwhile, *Out On Tuesday* is coming out with a vibrancy and panache long overdue from the lesbian and gay communities. ●

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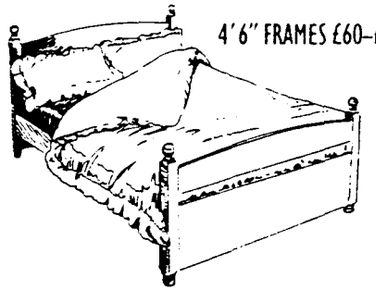

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Jam Sessions

A nightmare of transport chaos is unfolding in the south-east of England. Stuck on a bus in another rush-hour jam with an irritable four-year-old, Jos Boys reflects on the limits of Peter Hall's vision of London in 2001

Twenty-five years ago, in his book *London 2000*, the prolific, populist writer on urban planning, Peter Hall, invented a 'representative' London family, the Dumills. They illustrated his vision of the future in the south-east of England. Edward, 54, Mary, 52, Sebastian, 25, and Chloe, 21 were highly mobile with jobs, schools and social lives spread far across the London region. They think 'as little of going 25 miles to work as of going over to Brittany for the weekend.'

Since the mid-60s, this vision – and its associated landscape of high-level expressways and pedestrian decks – has come in for increasingly heavy criticism. Feminists in particular have exposed attempts by planners and architects to re-order cities to meet the needs of an assumed 'norm' of a white, male, middle-class car driver commuting to work in the city centre and returning to his non-working wife and suburban retreat in the evening.

There are two major problems here. First, the norm was a stereotype of the middle classes particularly inadequate in its description of the lives of many middle-class women. It also marginalised working-class people, the elderly and less mobile, the unemployed, and people living in the inner cities. Yet this assumption about how 'most' people lived was offered as common sense, and justified by simple juxtaposition with data about population distribution or employment.

The second problem was the unspoken belief that freedom of movement in cities somehow equated with wider freedoms of opportunity. This contained, of course, a partial truth. Increased mobility *does* open up access to more job locations, more choice in shopping and cultural facilities. But it was partial because it assumed that everyone started with equal access to a car, with equal mobility, without the severe restrictions of poverty. For Hall, poverty and deprivation in inner cities are an 'inconvenience' equivalent to the irritation of getting stuck in traffic jams a lot. His vision offered freedom and choice while ignoring basic economic and social inequalities.

Now, 25 years on, Hall has reassessed his view of planning in the south-east of England in **London 2001** *(Unwin Hyman £17.95 hbk)*. The Dumills re-appear, commuting freely across south-east England and to France, but the predicted townscape is no longer 'swooping expressways in a series of gigantic one-way loops' (1963) and the 'pedestrian deck is far less vast' (1989). The London region now stretches from Dorset to Suffolk and its economy is still expanding.

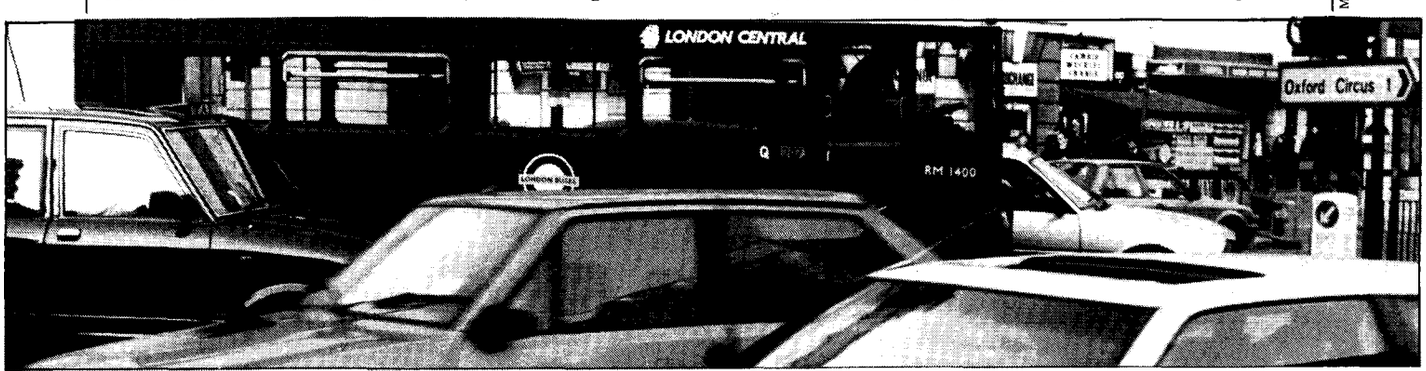
The 'norm' has been adapted to conditions in the expanding city regions of London's 'outer rings'; Bournemouth-Poole, Swindon, Milton Keynes, and Ipswich. Here, London's growth is concentrated in a series of overlapping job markets and centres, providing mainly white-collar employment and the semblance of semi-rural home life. Inner London loses both manufacturing and servicing jobs and, like other major cities, only attracts high-status company headquarters. The normal husband still commutes from an outlying suburb – now much further away – to the centre. Mrs Dumill commutes to a more local centre.

The same pattern of partial truths still obscures deeper understanding. Hall's sample household seems to reflect some real and potential changes in social, economic and physical structure. The patterns of growth in the London region reflect a wider economic restructuring of production into city-centre headquarters, suburban, white-collar work and the removal of routine production to other regions of Britain and the Third World. It reflects the increasing presence of women in professional employment, and the increased commuting distances of both women and men. But it is still offered as a 'norm' to generalise from. And it still offers (controlled) growth and increased mobility as a planning solution to the current state of cities and towns.

Yet how can I possibly relate to the Dumills when I remain invisible in his scenario; a single parent with a child under five, a part-time teacher and, ironically enough, a PhD student in Peter Hall's own department at the University of Reading? While he jets across the Atlantic (to his other university at Berkley) I struggle on two buses to get my child to nursery, and a further four changes on bus, tube and train to reach my lectures.

Playing the professional, apolitical role, Hall manages only the occasional reference to economic and social differences. But the inequalities of wealth distribution, of restricted mobility in a society which rewards freedom of mobility, clearly affect our use of the physical environment. And it affects us all in different ways. We cannot generalise from the Dumills, or for that matter from my experience. We need a much deeper understanding of how different inequalities affect different groups in society.

Not all planners think like Peter Hall. Many are committed to planning for equality. Schemes like the GLC's Fares Fair campaign, for instance, which benefit the poorest and least-mobile sections of society as an alternative to Hall's proposed toll-roads and car-changing systems, which clearly least penalise wealthy car drivers. But the way planning is taught and practised is still based on assumptions masquerading as apolitical and *obvious* truths. If planning is to be a force in improving our physical surroundings for everyone the Dumill approach must change. ●



Mark Tynan

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AIDS AND OPPRESSION

Many parallels can be drawn between the experiences of people with HIV, AIDS and other oppressed groups. All have experienced mistreatment from different sectors of the community and within the work place and have been misrepresented by the media and other institutions. In addition, people with HIV and AIDS often meet with hostile and judgemental responses because of assumptions made about them and the way they have contracted the virus. The course will be of particular relevance to those working in the voluntary and statutory sectors and those working for community organisations who are committed to equality of opportunity and to people personally affected by HIV infection.

Dates: May 9, 10, 11th. Price: £103.50 (inclusive of VAT).

LIVING AND WORKING WITH AIDS

The aim of this three day residential workshop is to offer participants the opportunity to explore a range of options and the chance to develop the skills needed to set up support structures for themselves and for people affected by HIV, ARC and AIDS.

The following areas will be covered:

• Developing basic counselling skills • Simple relaxation techniques • Complementary health care and good nutrition • Setting goals and developing strategies • Using resources effectively and networking • Establishing equality for ourselves and others

Practical and experimental work will take place in large and small group settings and through working in pairs. Participants will be invited to develop their own personal strategies for the future and strategies, where relevant, for the workplace.

This is a residential workshop, starting on the evening of Monday 22nd May and finishing on Thursday 25th May at 4 pm.

Price: £126.50 inclusive of VAT

REFRAMING AIDS
– The Politics of an Epidemic –

This course will comprise of six evening classes followed by a one day seminar.

The course will enable people to consider the connections between different aspects of social policy concerning HIV infection and AIDS which are often overlooked and even when recognised, are rarely connected. These include:

• The use of language • The dimensions of race, class, gender and sexuality • The health service reponse to the epidemic • Welfare provision in contemporary Britain • The relationship between the voluntary and statutory sectors

The dates are as follows:
Evening classes: 6th, 13th, 20th March 1989 3rd, 10th, 17th April 1989 Full day: Saturday 22nd April Price: £45 inclusive of VAT

WOMEN AND HIV INFECTION

This course is for women with HIV infection, ARC and AIDs, paid and unpaid employees in womens organisations, women working in refuges, and for homeless, alcohol and drug projects and women active within the community.

The aims of the course are as follows:

To discuss what services are currently being offered to women with HIV infection by the voluntary and statutory sectors, by womens organisations and by self-organised groups • To look creatively at ways in which womens organisations and services provided for women by women might act to meet the needs of women affected by HIV infection • To explore effective ways of influencing the range and scope of current and future services provided by the statutory sector.

Dates: 18th, 19th, 20th April 1989 Price: £50 inclusive of VAT

Taking Liberties

A series of open talks on social aspects of HIV infection and disease. These talks will run for five consecutive Tuesdays from 7-10pm, starting 2nd May 1989.

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DEVELOPING ANTI RACIST SERVICES TO MEET THE NEEDS OF BLACK PEOPLE WITH HIV, ARC AND AIDS

This course is for anyone in the public, voluntary, private sectors whose main task is to organise and provide services for people affected by HIV, ARC and AIDS.

The Course will examine the relationship between AIDS & RACISM as well as developing strategies to ensure that Black people and other racial and national minority groups have equal access to available services.

Price: £103.50 inclusive of VAT

Dates: Available from London Lighthouse.

All enquiries about these and other courses to:

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CHOICE WORDS

Paddy's Patter

Leader of the SLD, Paddy Ashdown, talks to Chris Granlund about his life and his reading habits

My first memory of being told stories, was with our Indian *ayah*, it was real colonial stuff. She used to tell me stories in Hindustani as there weren't too many books around. I also recall my father sitting and reading to us at bedtime back in Ireland when I was six or seven. There were seven of us at one stage and I was the eldest. He read Kipling, it sounds like real jingoistic stuff but he was a very progressive man. He was a colonel in the army in India part of a line of generation after generation of senior officers. Somehow or other he preserved a very strong sense of nonconformity, he was the great arguer in the family. My mother was one of those women who made life happen by living in the practical world and giving everybody around her so much love. She almost killed herself by trying to love too many people too much. They were a strong influence on my life although I saw them for very little time, maybe for a total of two years before I was 19 when they emigrated to Australia.

I first went to the local school in Donegal, County Down, when I was five, going on to the private education system in Northern Ireland when I was seven which continued until I was 18. I don't remember the process of learning to read. I never remember how I learn things but I always remember what use I've put them to.

I was very attached to Beatrix Potter's *Jeremy Fisher*. I enjoyed those stories again with our kids. I've always been a fan of CS Lewis, one of the seminal books I read was *On The Problem Of Pain* which is absolutely fascinating on the question of how on earth there can be a God if there is so much pain in the world.

Until the age of 16, I was bored by school. It always seemed to me to be a pedestrian place, inflexible and rigid. Then I came in contact with two teachers who simply set me on fire. The opening up of English literature, especially Shakespeare and the metaphysical poets, was sparked off by these two men. I won a scholarship which paid for my school fees on the understanding that I would go into the navy. I don't regret that but by the time I was preparing for my A levels I was hooked on learning and I remember being very sad when my last school reports said that I really ought to go to university. I did go into the navy but eventually I did an interpretership in Hong Kong in 1967-70 and I developed a love of the Chinese language and literature.

I was struck by the wealth of this culture and the political importance of art was a revelation. Art and literature are the things that give the disparate group of people we call the Chinese nation a sense of national cohesion. My habit of lateral thinking and awareness of the importance of the environment and the holistic approach come from my Chinese experience; taking a long-term view of things, recognising the importance of the quality of life. Going back to be a student at 27 has given me a profound conviction that what we need in Britain more than anything else is a decent adult education system.

My belief in equality of opportunity comes from my time in the services when I was asked, by accident of birth, to command people who, by any measure, were better than I was and to some of whom I owe my life. I often think of the extraordinary society we would have if we gave them all the chances they need. I cast a vote for Labour in every election up until 1967. It wasn't until 1970 that I discovered this funny, furry little animal, the Liberal Party, an almost endangered species in the corner of British politics. I discovered that I had really been a Liberal all of my life with my beliefs in the individual, equality of opportunity and a non-corporate, non-collectivist view of society.

I have a reading file which is never empty so I read all the time, it is the most crushing job. Devastating. I have not read a novel, or anything apart from the papers that are put in front of me for at least a year. My contact with ordinary people is drastically reduced – you just don't get that in parliament. I dislike the style of the house. The political machinery in this country destroys your personal life and gives you heart attacks. And it doesn't even govern effectively. I rarely get to read a newspaper although I do read a digest of the news that's prepared for me. I keep on making resolutions to find the time to keep myself fitter and to read more but it never seems to work out.

One of the most hopeful signs in society today is that those people whose attitudes and politics were shaped in the 60s are now coming to be leaders of our society. There's a fascinating report, *The Taylor Nelson Monitor*, which concludes that Britain is divided into three groups; one group consists of the children of the industrial revolution, traditional Labour supporters, and it is in decline. The second group are the yuppies who follow the philosophy that more is better, those who have gained most from the Thatcher revolution. The third group is more interested in the quality of life, they have an holistic approach, a concern for the environment. This group is about one third of the total and is growing. It is predicted that it will be the dominant group in Western politics by the mid-1990s. These are the children of the 60s. They are the vote that we have to go for. ●

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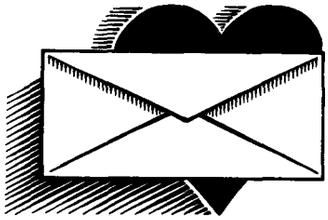

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● **Happy 75th birthday** on March 4th to the truly evergreen Betty Matthews. With love and buckets of admiration from all at MT.

FOR SALE

● **James Connolly,** Irish Socialist leader – A bust in off-white stone cast; limited number, £24.50. From Celtic Arts and Crafts, 27, Ballyraine Park, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal, Ireland.

M·T EVENTS

● **National:** Marxism Today is beginning preparatory work on our national event for 1989. This will take place at City University, London over the weekend October 27/28/29. If you would like to get involved in any capacity please get in touch. No previous experience necessary, Just lots of enthusiasm, initiative and imagination. Phone Mark Perryman on (01) 608 0265 or write to MT (Events) 16 St John Street, London EC1M 4AY.

● **Leeds:** Marxism Today presents "On your Marx" on Saturday March 4 at Leeds TUC Club, Savile Mount, Leeds. A full day of debate, workshops, exhibitions and creche. Speakers include Beatrix Campbell, Richard Caborn, Martin Jacques, Michael Meadowcroft and Victor Orlik. For programme contact the organisers, Yorkshire District CPGB, Leeds TUC Club, Savile Mount, Leeds 7. Tel: (0532) 626343.

● **Birmingham:** Marxism Today presents "New Times New Thinking". A day of discussion with Sarah Benton, Ros Brunt, Jeremy Seabrook, Clare Short and others. Saturday March 4 at The Community Centre, Heathfield Road, Kings Heath, Birmingham. For programme phone (021) 643 8081.

● **Middlesborough:** "Whats Left in Cleveland". Saturday April 15 at St Marys Centre, Corporation Rd, Middlesborough. A full day of discussions, exhibitons and entertainments. Organised by Teeside CP in association with Marxism Today. Details: (0642) 827499.

● **Wirral:** Marxism Today Forum with Beatrix Campbell, Tony Lane, Keva Coombes and Others, on Saturday March 11 at Birkenhead TU Centre, 2a Price St, Birkenhead. Organised by Wirral CP in association with Marxism Today. Details, Tel: (051) 638 9313

● **Wolverhampton:** Marxism Today discussion group meets third Tuesday every month, CCR building, 2, Clarence Rd, Wolverhampton. 7.30pm.

● **Oxford:** Marxism Today event to mark the bicentenary of the French Revolution. Helpers wanted, contact Geoff Andrews, 49 Walton Street Oxford. Tel: (0865) 52835.

● **Liverpool:** Marxism Today Discussion meeting with Bob Cole, Secretary of CND Cymru on "Internationalism and the Left". Thursday March 23, 7.30pm at 24 Hardman Street, Liverpool 1.

● **Manchester:** Marxism Today Discussion Group meets on the third Wednesday of every month, 7.45pm at Chorlton Park Evening Centre, Mauldleth Road. For details, phone (061) 445 6333.

● **Haringey:** "New Times for Labour?" A debate on the case for an electoral agreement. Speakers, Nina Temple of the Communist Party's Executive Committee and Barbara Rocke, Labour Candidate for Hornsey and Wood Green. Tuesday March 21, 8pm at Hornsey Library, Haringey Park, Crouch End, London N8. Organised by Haringey Marxism Today Group, details Tel: (01) 348 8915.

M·T HANDS

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Tel: 09073 78255

● **Put cycling on the public agenda:** Trafford Cycle Campaign, 6, Selworth Avenue, Sale, Cheshire. 061-973 1048.

TRAVEL/HOLIDAYS

● **Women's Sailing Holidays.** South Coast, France, Channel Islands. Beginners welcome. Brochure: tel. (0703) 636749.

Bed and Breakfast, Small Conference Facilities, Self-Catering Holiday Accommodation. Private grounds, informal atmosphere, Peak Park countryside,games facilities, vegetarians catered for.
AT
Thornbridge Manor Herb Nursery, Great Langstone, Nr. Bakewell, Derbyshire. Tel. (062987) 643 or (062981) 3444

● **Journey Latin America.** Low cost flights, holiday journeys, 3-6 weeks. JLA, 16 Devonshire Rd., London W4 2HD. Tel. 01-747 3108.

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Albanian holidays,
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The Albanian Shop, 3 Betterton Street, Covent Garden, WC2.
Tel. 01-836 0976.

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CONTACT

● **Sexual Politics:** Are there any gay men interested in discussing this issue in a group? If so contact Box 4.

● **Gingerbread,** the organisation for lone parents and children, is producing a book about "survival skills" for lone parents. We need volunteers who are lone parents, to read and comment on chapters of the book as they are written. It doesn't matter who you are. If you are responsible for bringing up your children on your own, and can spare a little time to read material and answer a few questions, we would like to hear from you. Contact: Leila Carlyle, Gingerbread, 35 Wellington Street, London, WC2, or phone 01-240 0953.

● **Volunteers are urgently needed** to help organise for demonstration on March 18th. Please contact the Broadwater Farm Defence Campaign, 79 Tangmere, Broadwater Farm Estate, Tottenham, London N17 6NB. Tel: 01-885 3752.

VIDEO

ANTI-POVERTY VIDEO AND PACK "HAPPY FAMILIES"
• Drama about a family's slide into debt and the jaws of the loan shark due to Social Security changes.
• Designed as a discussion and *campaigning tool.*
Cost: £45. Hire: £10.
Swingbridge Video (MT), Norden House, 41 Stowell Street, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 4YB. Tel: (091) 232 3762.

● **International Women's Day:** The Video. Details: Vera Productions. Tel (0532) 428646.

M·T BOOKSHELVES

● **Hammersmith Books.** Famous mail-order service since 1948. Over 100,000 out-of-print titles. State wants. Barnes High Street, London SW13 9LR. Tel: 01-876 7254 (24 hrs.)

● **Reading Communist Review No. 2,** 29 page theoretical journal. Includes 'Post-Fordist Flaws'. £1.00, from Reading CPGB, PO Box 160, Reading, RG5 4LH.

● **Looking Beyond the Frame:** Racism, Representation and Resistance. Ed.s Michelle Reeves and Genny Hammond. Challenges the way Black/Third World people are portrayed by the Western media. £3.80 (p+p inc.) from Third World First, 232 Cowley Road, Oxford, OX4 1UH.

● **Central Books:** Exceptionally well-stocked with new and secondhand books. Also cards, posters, T-shirts etc. Personal mail-order service. Open 10-6 Monday to Friday, 10-5 Saturdays. 37 Grays Inn Road, London, WC1X 8PS. Tel. 01-242 5166.

● **Review Copies** and other books in fine condition bought and sold by Vermillion Books at reduced prices. 57 Red Lion Street, London, WC1. Telephone 01-242 5822.

● **Second-hand List now out.** Something for everybody from activist to archivist. Mostly socialist history/politics. Send large SAE to Central Books, 37 Grays Inn Road, London, WC1X 8PS.

VACANCIES

● **Marxism Today** needs WP operators as we gear up to hi-tech production. If you have time on your hands during normal office hours, could work in EC1 and have Word Perfect or similar experience, please contact Jane Taylor on 01-608 0265.

M·T HOMES

● **Wife and husband** (not young) seek pied à terre (one room) in London. Regular rental paid but occasional use. Box 1.

● **Woman,** 27, leftie, veggie etc, wishing to move, seeks friendly (communal?) household anywhere in London, preferably with a cat. Please write to Box 5.

● **Fine Young Professionals (3)** urgently require two bedroomed flat/small house in London. Any area considered but pref. centralish. Approx £500 pcm. Box 6.

EVENTS

● **Manchester Forum:** dialogue for the democratic opposition. Next meeting in 'Life after Thatcher' series: Wed. 5th April – Bea Campbell: 'The longest revolution: a feminist agenda for Britain'. 7.45pm, Conference Room, Manchester Town Hall. Admission £1.50 (75p unwaged). Contact (061) 434 8930.

● **March for Justice** – free the framed Broadwater Farm prisoners, free the Guildford Four, free the Birmingham Six. Demand civil rights and justice for Britain's Black and Irish communities. This affects all of us. BE THERE! March assembles 12 noon, March 18th, Tottenham Green, Town Hall Approach Road, Seven Sisters. Rally 3pm, Ducketts Common, Turnpike Lane. Speakers: Bernie Grant MP, Unmesh Desai, Stop The Strip Searches Campaign, Prisoners' Relatives and others. Organised by Broadwater Farm Defence Campaign and Irish In Britain Representation Group.

COURSES

Racism and Resistance – The International Agenda
Third World First Conference, March 10-12th, Castle College, Sheffield.
Speakers Include: A. Sivanandan (Race and Class), Bernadette McAliskey, PLO, SWAPO, ANC, AFA, Local Anti-Racist groups.
Social Sat. pm. Full Access. Creche.
Details: 3WQ, 232 Cowley Road, Oxford, OX4 1UH.

University of Keele
CENTRE FOR INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS
PART-TIME Courses starting in autumn 1989
MA/DIPLOMA in INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS
Details from Dr. Roger Seifert, Centre for Industrial Relations, University of Keele, Staffs. ST5 5BG. Tel: (0782) 621111

"Changing Identities"
Socialism and the Politics of Difference
A conference on Saturday May 13th at the University of London Union.
Speakers include: Ros Brunt; Beatrix Campbell; Stuart Hall; Suzanne Moore; Frank Mort; Homi Bhaba; Simon Watney and Jeffrey Weeks. Organised by Lawrence and Wishart, 39 Museum Street, London WC1
Tel. 01-405-0103.

WEA RESIDENTIAL STUDY WEEKEND
March 17th-19th
Raymond Williams: A Journey of Hope.
Tutors: Professor Graham Martin: the OU, Raphael Samuel: Ruskin College, David Lusted: BFI Education, Derek Tatton: The WEA. £36 (concessions possible). A few places left.
Contact: The Wedgwood Memorial College, Barlaston, Staffs. Or phone (0582) 424588 (Tony Dennis) or (078139) 2105 (Derek Tatton).

● **So you want to make a Tape/Slide?** Progressive residential weekend course in Worcestershire countryside, will cover all techniques and possibilities. March 10-12. £125. Details and leaflet: Bob Fromer (08864) 203.

● **Gender and Social Policy** is entering its second successful year. Join us in October 1989, full- or part-time. M.Sc./Diploma at University of Bristol. Details from Ann Warren-Cox: (0272) 303030.

THERAPY

● **Caring experienced psychotherapist** for problems or growth. Carole Grace B.A., BSc., 01 743 8096 (24 hrs).

RATES AND DATES

● **A "linage" entry** looks like this. It costs 50p per word, plus 15% VAT.

This is an example of a semi-display advertisement. It costs £7.00 per column centimetre. So because this is 2cms deep it costs £14.00 plus 15% VAT.

Box numbers are free. Entries and replies are strictly confidential. When answering a box number, write your letter to the advertiser, then seal it in an envelope and mark the box no. in pencil in the top left-hand corner. Put a stamp on this envelope. Then place it in another envelope, put a stamp on that and send it to: Marketplace, Marxism Today, 16 St. John St., London EC1M 4AY.

Deadline for the April issue:
3rd March 1989.

Contributors

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Beatrix Campbell is a writer and broadcaster and a member of *Marxism Today*'s editorial board.
Andy Medhurst is a freelance lecturer and writer on the media and popular culture.
Michael Wenyon uses his training in optics to make art with Susan Gamble. Last year they were artists in residence at the Royal Greenwich Observatory.
Nicci Gerrard is a freelance writer and author of *Into The Mainstream: How Feminism Has Changed Women's Writing* (Pandora, April).
Pratibha Parmar is a writer and film-maker.
Jos Boys teaches environmental design at North London Polytechnic.
Paddy Ashdown is the leader of the SLD.
Chris Granlund is *Marxism Today*'s culture editor.
Diane Coyle is a journalist at *The Economist*.

Additional contributions to this issue:
Production: Belinda Canham, Apala Chowdhury, James Goodman, Maggie Kelly, Charlie Lynch, Rachel O'Brien, Chris Pate, Andrew Shore, Ben Whittam-Smith, Jane Whiteing.
Research: Belinda Canham.
Promotion: Roy Blockley, Robert Stead, Halil Torhanli, Paul Whiteing.
Events: Paul Driscoll, Phil Philipou.

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Anita Roddick

Courtesy Marketing Week

Anita Roddick: Appealing to the pale-green body shopper

Anita Roddick is neither a typical environmentalist nor a typical capitalist; it's hard to be either when you're both. Businesswoman of the year in 1985, OBE, managing director of a £46m business, she is also an ex-aid worker who sells natural beauty products, developed without cruelty to animals, through the Body Shop chain.

The Body Shop is one of Britain's business success stories. The first branch opened in 1976. Twelve years later there were 107 branches in Britain and 232 overseas, with another hundred planned to open in 1989. Profits last year rose 56% to £9m before tax, making the Body Shop the darling of the Stock Exchange.

High profits make it easy for the stock market to overlook Roddick's commitment to environmental causes. The Body Shop gives money to campaigns run by Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace. It provided £18,000 for research which led to the launch in December of Ark Green Consumer Products – a company that will sell both environmentally-safe detergents and organic food.

'Market researchers think that most consumers still see environmentalists as a freaky fringe, opposed to progress'

The Body Shop also uses its window space for campaigns on environmental issues as well as for displaying its wares. Roddick reckons that 25 million people have passed the shop windows at some time or another. These poster campaigns have played a part in educating consumers to demand products that do not involve harm to the environment. The 'green consumer' was acclaimed in September with Green Consumer Week and the publication of a guide to green shopping.

How green is the green consumer? Only pale green according to recent market research. Shoppers will buy environment-conscious goods – if they are not much dearer than alternatives and easy to find. But green enough to have started worrying retailers and manufacturers. The latest example is the progress of the campaign against the use of CFCs (chlorofluorocarbons, which damage the ozone layer) in aerosols. In the past six months many CFC-free hairsprays and deodorants have appeared in the shops; the Green Consumer Guide lists 144 brands.

The Body Shop's alternative beauty products do not sell as well as they do because they are 'green', but rather because they are good. I buy them because they smell nice, are good value, and I like the way the shops look. My mother buys them too. She didn't know they were environment-friendly until I told her.

Roddick admitted in a recent interview that she did not set out to campaign through the Body Shop. Working for the United Nations in Third World countries in the early 1970s, she copied local people's use of natural products. Back in England, married and needing to make money to feed the kids, she decided to set up in business. She is a businesswoman first: 'The only thing I could think of to sell was the ingredients I'd seen people using around the world.'

Some of the characteristic features of Body Shop products reflect the basic economics of running a small business. Urine sample bottles were the cheapest – hence the plain, and now biodegradable, plastic bottles. Labels were handwritten because printing was too expensive. The initial loan was secured with Roddick's house. The company has kept its subsequent borrowing low: in the jargon, it is 'ungeared'. This makes the stock market favour the Body Shop more than the Sock Shop, which is heavily indebted.

But despite accepting commercial reality, the Body Shop tries to be an atypical business. It not only makes sound products, it also makes them soundly. It produces a quarter of what it sells itself, and plans to increase this proportion. Employees' conditions have to be good. The Body Shop is said to pay First World wages to Third World workers, though this makes the absence of cheaper competition harder to understand.

The bank manager Roddick first asked for a loan did not think natural beauty would sell at all. He turned down her application. But the idea paid off in two ways in the end. Run as a serious money-making business, the Body Shop has benefitted from not being strongly linked with the green movement in shoppers' minds. Market researchers think that most consumers still see environmentalists as a freaky fringe, opposed to progress and technology. Green products run the risk of being seen as lower quality for a higher price.

On the other hand, the Body Shop's products appeal to some of the groups which are most concerned about the environment: students, young women, women with children. So Roddick found the right market niche for her natural products, a market which will carry on growing.

When the Body Shop's 1988 results were published a few weeks ago, the *Financial Times* conceded: 'Eventually the Body Shop miracle will end, but those who feared saturation in the market for peppermint foot balm some three years ago may admit that it has a good few years to run.'

How long depends on whether any competitors can catch up. The green consumer is just getting into her stride. The green producer is scurrying to keep up. Anita Roddick has the competitive edge of having got there 12 years ago. ●

Diane Coyle

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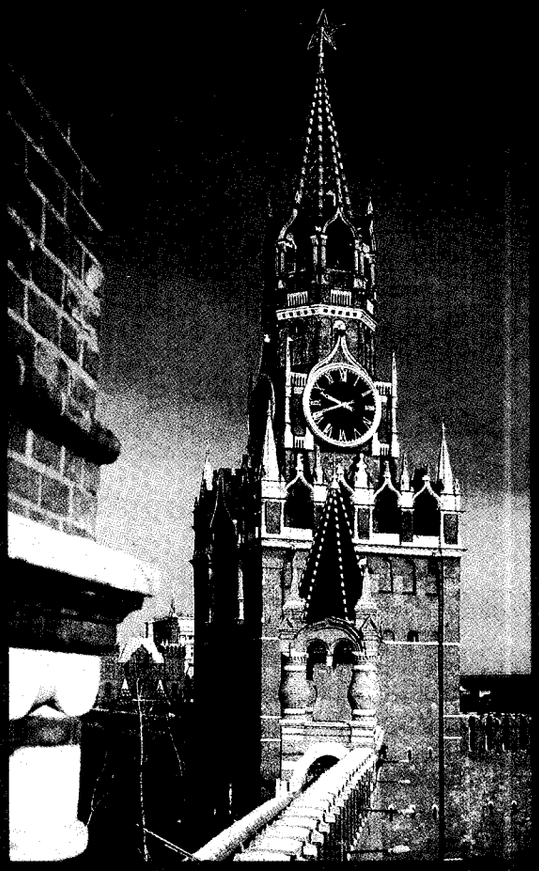

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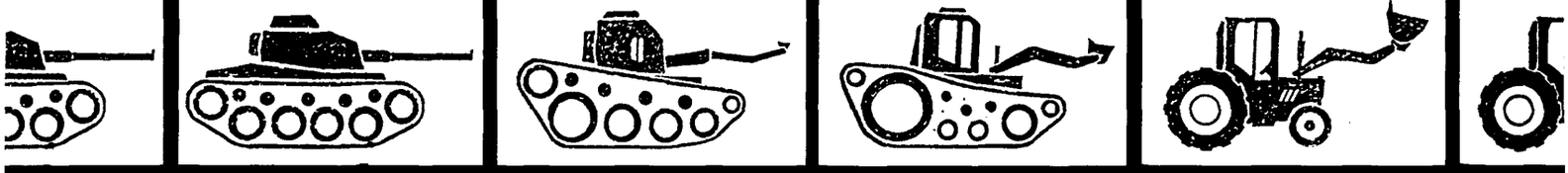

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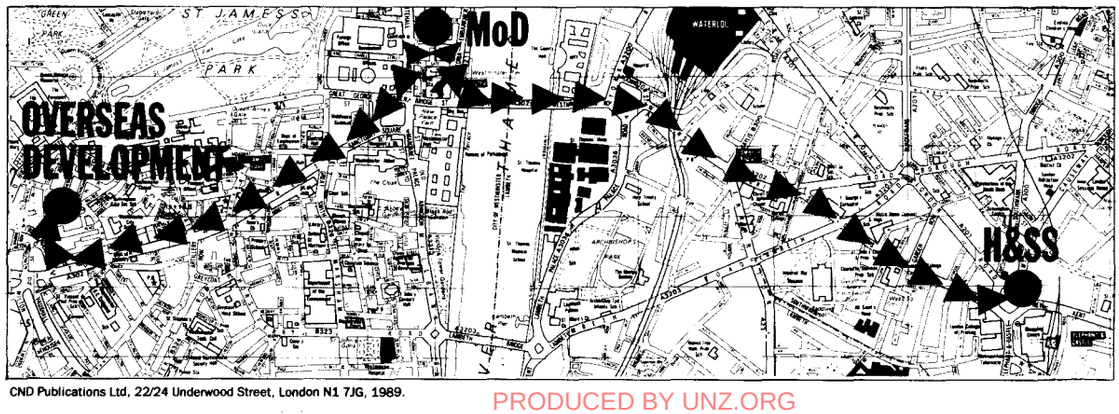

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